

MRS. MAYBURN'S TWINS;

WITH HER

TRIALS IN THE MORNING, NOON, AFTERNOON AND
EVENING

OF

JUST ONE DAY.

BY

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Author of "Helen's Babies."

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TO
M A M M A ,
MY HEROINE,
WHO MAY BE FOUND IN NEARLY EVERY HOME IN THE WORLD.
This Story is Dedicated
IN HEARTIEST SYMPATHY.

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MRS. MAYBURN'S TWINS.

MORNING.

BR—R—R—R—whizz—z—z—z ting-a-ling a-ling a-ling
a-ling a-ling a-ling.

Such was the remark, prolonged to the extent of five minutes, that the alarm clock made to Mr. and Mrs. Mayburn, at seven o'clock one morning. It was not the first remark that Mrs. Mayburn had heard since she retired, eight hours before, for there were other voices of the night besides that of the little clock ticking, and other hands besides those that went around on the dial. Baby Mayburn, otherwise called "The Jefful," which was a corruption of the appellation "The Dreadful," that had been satirically bestowed upon her, had spoken two or three times, and though she did not talk good English, her mamma understood that each time she spoke she wanted some bread and milk. The Jefful's last request had been made just as dawn was breaking, and, as the Jefful was a good little girl, and consequently loved light better than darkness,

she determined to stay awake. There was nothing wrong about this; the hours at which people should stay awake are affairs for personal taste to determine. But The Jefful was not satisfied with mere wakefulness; she wanted to get up and be doing, and, as she was only ten months old, she could not get up and move about without assistance. Justice to The Jefful compels us to say that she did her best; she wriggled, she pushed the covering off as far as her short arms would let her, and kicked it the rest of the way. Then she addressed herself to her father's hat, which hung on the chair two or three feet from her crib. She might have known, before speaking, that there was no head in the hat, and so conversation was an utter impossibility; but babies cannot be expected to know everything, so she continued her remarks for some time, and then she scolded the hat soundly for its silence. The hat did not say anything in return; hats are as quiet when scolded as really well-bred people are, but their silence does not make the scolder any more amiable; so The Jefful finally ended with an angry yell which would have raised that hat way up if it were not, as we have said before, that there was no head inside for it to be raised from. There was a head on mamma's pillow, though, and the baby's yell found its way into that, and

raised it very quickly ; and when The Jefful saw it, she said, " Mom—ma ! " in such an aggrieved way that mamma felt called upon to express a little sympathy. This done, she drew the crib blankets over The Jefful again, and rocked the crib gently, which pleased The Jefful so that she lay perfectly quiet, while mamma's eyes slowly closed and went back to dreamland in search of the remainder of a dream they had left there five minutes before. Then mamma's hand dropped silently from the crib, and found its way back under the coverlid, and neither mamma nor baby knew anything about it until baby's suspicions were aroused by the crib swinging less and less to each side. Now The Jefful, like all other pure-minded persons, had an utter horror of deceit, and when she found that she was not being rocked any longer she felt that she had been cruelly deceived ; so she expressed her suspicion, disappointment, sense of injured dignity and general disapproval in the single word,

" Ow ! "

This word does not appear in either Webster's Dictionary or Worcester's, so we do not know what it means. Perhaps mamma knew, but may-be she didn't hear it correctly, for she ceased at once to look for her lost dream ; she raised herself on her elbow, and told The Jefful that

she was a bad little girl, and deserved a spanking. Baby did not know what a spanking was, but the tone in which mamma threatened it, showed her that it must be something perfectly awful, so her feelings suffered still worse, and she said "Ow!" again, repeating it a great many times, as if she wanted mamma to make no mistake about her meaning. Then mamma seemed to understand The Jefful, for she changed her tone, and said in the tenderest tone in the world.

"Zare—no—s'e s'ant be 'panked, zat s'e s'ant. Did mamma 'buse her own ittie 'peck of a Jefful?—Mamma's an' old Jefful her seff, so s'e is, an' see was awfoo naughty to her own beebee dile. Now, Jefful doe s'leep aden, so as not to wake poo', tired papa? Zere, zere," and mamma covered the Jefful again and leaned over her face and kissed her, and The Jefful saw, by mamma's looks, that her suspicions were undoubtedly unfounded and the deceit unintentional, so confidence was restored, and mamma swung the crib again, and The Jefful put her thumb into her mouth as she always did when at peace with the world, while mamma, seeing by the little clock that it still lacked nearly three-quarters of an hour of seven, attempted to drop asleep again;—she was not particular about finding the broken dream.

The Jefful dropped asleep herself, though nothing had been farther from her intention when she allowed a wink to loiter half finished on her eyes. How long she might have slept no one knows, for at sleeping she was a most industrious little girl. But this morning a hungry fly had gone out in search of a breakfast, and had alighted right on The Jefful's lips, thus showing himself to be a fly of excellent taste, for The Jefful's lips were the sweetest things in all the world, and their sweetness was of that peculiar kind that makes the enjoyer want more and more, the more he tastes it. The Jefful would not have objected to this excusable robbery, for her supply of sweetness was inexhaustible, but when the fly turned around, with more carelessness than becomes a thief, his wing brushed across The Jefful's lip and tickled her so that she awoke, to find the crib quiet, and mamma quiet, and even herself quiet; so she said a great many things in quite a petulant tone for one so young. Mamma pretended not to hear it, but when papa sleepily grunted "Goodness!" and within two or three feet of her ear too, she roused herself so suddenly that papa muttered something about the uselessness of knocking down the house. This time The Jefful determined to be alert. She defined her position in her own way; then she turned over, and watched

mamma closely. Mamma kept the crib swinging for some moments ; but the instant she withdrew her hand, The Jefful rebuked her soundly. Then mamma, though working away, closed her eyes, and The Jefful protested against that liberty, so mamma opened them again, and was greeted with a jubilant crow, so very loud that she wondered whether compliance might not be worse than slumber, so far as papa's peace was concerned. Then The Jefful sang a little matin song—a song without words, although the music was not Mendelssohn's—and mamma discouraged her with a low "Sh—h—h," and then The Jefful began to cry, at which mamma patted her cheek and The Jefful put one of mamma's fingers in her mouth and bit it with her lovely little sharp teeth, while mamma ground her own, closing her lips over them very tightly. Then mamma took her hand away, and such a howl as that Jefful gave !—and such a growl as escaped papa ! Poor aggrieved little Jefful thrust her tiny hands between the bars of the crib and reached appealingly for the departed hand, which was more than mamma could bear ; so she took the Jefful out of the crib and into her own bed and arms, and just then the clock struck the half hour. In the next half hour The Jefful was a very busy little girl. First she had to look grateful at mamma

for two or three minutes, in which mamma made up her mind that it wasn't of the slightest consequence how often or how early she was aroused in the morning; she might even be willing to let papa be robbed of his needed sleep, for why should he not be in a position to know what an angel The Jefful really was—and his own daughter too? When The Jefful had done the grateful as far as she thought proper, she began to inquire and try experiments. She picked open mamma's eyelids when the latter closed them for a moment in an ecstasy of thankfulness, she tightened one of her little hands around just three hairs upon mamma's forehead, and found that they would stand, without breaking or pulling out, the heaviest strain that The Jefful could put on them. Mamma tried to end this experiment, but baby protested so earnestly that mamma endured to the best of her ability, and indulged in facial contortions that The Jefful enjoyed amazingly, never doubting that they were given for her special diversion. Indeed, she laughed so heartily that mamma was again fearful for papa's rest, so she cuddled The Jefful very close to her and kissed the top of her flossy little yellow head. But this treatment did not suit the young lady at all; kisses and pettings were all very well when she was tired or in need of consolation, but

early in the morning, after a night of healthful sleep, they were out of place; so mamma while in the act of giving The Jefful a very affectionate hug, was stopped suddenly by a smothered noise, which sounded somewhat thus:

“ Ya—ya—wa—wa—wogh ! ”

The squeeze was discontinued, and so was mamma's dream of bliss; but still The Jefful was quite a charming little body, so mamma did a great deal of pantomime for her with face and hands, and even extemporized a game of peep-bo between her fingers. But The Jefful was beginning to think that it was time for her to be up, instead of reclining in one position or another; so she put one of her pudgy hands behind mamma's head and took hold of one of mamma's ears with the other, and attempted to raise herself to a sitting position. She might have succeeded, for mamma was willing to be a stepping-stone, or a pulling block, or anything else that would benefit her children. But The Jefful's wee finger-nails were so many sharp little lancets, and as they closed, all together, on the back of mamma's ear, they caused so much pain that mamma herself could not keep from groaning as she attempted to remove the little hand. Then there was a conflict of opinions, and mamma won by main strength, and The

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Jefful declared, in her own spirited way that it wasn't fair, and she began to weep, and refused to be comforted ; so mamma sat up with her, and swayed to and fro, and then The Jefful spied the back of papa's head, and grasped at it, and almost got it before mamma could slightly change her position. Even then The Jefful wriggled and worked her little head around so that she could see the coveted prize ; so mamma got softly out of bed, intending to get a plaything for her darling, but, approaching the bureau, The Jefful spied the cup from which she had last been fed, and she straightway reached for it and said a great deal in the haste that comes of true earnestness. There was very little bread and milk in the cup, and mamma feared it might be sour; but finding it was not, she gave it to baby, reseating herself upon the bed to feed her. Moving about the room had chilled mamma, and a return to the warmth of her bed was delightful, but the baby felt so strengthened by her light lunch that she insisted upon jumping ; so mamma jumped her up and down until her arms were so tired that she could hardly have tossed a doll off down. Then she stretched herself for just a moment of rest, when the little clock made the remark with which our narrative opens, and mamma wondered how near dead she woudl be by bed-time, as she

felt almost dead already. But mamma had too much to do to wonder long ; there were her three other children to wake, and one of them, three-year-old Burnie, to be dressed ; while the twins, Fred and Bertha, who dressed themselves, never did so until after being stimulated by great quantities of talk, which was more exhaustive than the work of dressing them would be. Then the kitchen had to be visited, for the single Mayburn domestic did not watch the clock so closely as she should, and if breakfast was not ready promptly at eight o'clock, papa could not get to his office by nine. So mamma hurriedly dressed herself, while papa yawned and remarked :

“ What a dreadful row that baby kept up this morning ! ”

“ Yes,” said mamma.

“ Oh,” said papa, “ did you hear her, too ? ”

Mamma did not answer a word ; she only looked at papa, who looked at her, and saw how tired her eyes seemed for so early in the morning, so he told her that he was a forgetful brute, and that he wished [he could afford a nurse ; then he kissed mamma’s eyes, which seemed to help them a great deal, for they looked brighter a moment or two latter as papa sauntered down to the dining-room to read the morning paper, while mamma gave The Jef-

ful a crust to busy her lips and quiet her tongue, and hurried into the next chamber to see that Fred and Bertha were awake, and to dress her three-year-old—her "beeboy," as she called him, this name being the diminutive of baby boy. She found Bertha fast asleep, while her twin brother, Fred, with one stocking on, and his trowsers in his lap, was reading Wolf's "Wild Animals," and shivering most industriously.

"My dear boy," said mamma, at the same time shaking Bertha to rouse her, "put down that book this instant, and dress yourself. How can you sit there undressed, and reading, when it is so cold?"

"Why, you see, mamma," said Fred, "I had an awful dream about a bear, and I thought I'd look in the book and see what kind of one it was. I'll know all about it in a minute, and then I'll dress."

As for Bertha, she was wide awake in an instant, after mamma had touched her, and then mamma went to her three-year-old's crib, and saw two big brown eyes, which were looking very solemn, but which grew merry enough when they saw who was looking into them.

"How is mamma's beeboy this morning?" asked mamma, as she put her hands on his cheeks, and kissed him.

"Bobboker aw wighty," said the beeboy in return. He

had never read his own name from the family record in the big Bible, and he had scarcely ever heard it addressed to him, so he could not be blamed for naming himself, and although Bobboker is not as melodious a name as some, and is longer than others, and no one knew what it meant, and its owner himself declined to tell where he got it, he never called himself anything else, and generally spoke of himself in the third person.

"What shall mamma do for her beeboy?" asked mamma

"Kay me—kay Bobboker," was the answer, and so mamma took, or "kay" -ed Bobboker in her arms, and prepared to dress him, when she saw that Bertha, still in her night-dress, was reading.

"Bertha—begin dressing—at once!" said mamma.

"Fred is reading," said Bertha, with the air of one who was explaining away a misapprehension. For if either of the twins could not do whatever the other did, that twin felt greatly aggrieved.

"Never mind," said mamma, "Stop reading—both of you—this instant.

Fred laid his book down; Bertha closed hers, but held it tightly, while her eyes filled with tears.

"What are you crying about, my daughter?" asked mamma.

"Fred read longer than I did," sobbed Bertha.

"It was wrong for Fred to read at all before he was dressed, or before he had eaten his breakfast," said mamma, "so dry your eyes, and dress yourself; you know papa is always worried when every one does not come promptly to the breakfast-table."

Bertha dried her eyes slowly, but she evidently felt that she was a martyr; not that she was one willingly, however, for suddenly Fred complained:

"Mamma, Bertha is making perfectly awful faces at me."

"Bertha, what is the matter?" asked Mamma.

"Well, he *did* read longer than I did," said Bertha, and then her tears burst forth again.

"Don't be silly, my daughter," said mamma; "it is foolish, and wrong too, to want to do anything improper merely because your brother did it. Now brighten your eyes and dress yourself; all these minutes in which you are crying are flying away, and you will never get them again."

"You'll have lots more though, Bertha," said Fred.

"I 'spect you'll always be doing things to make me unhappy in them though," answered Bertha.

"You're a hateful, ungrateful thing," said Fred.

"Ya—ya—ya," said Bertha, showing her pretty teeth in a very ugly way.

"Children—children," exclaimed mamma, stamping with her foot, "be quiet! Fred take your clothes into my room, and dress there alone. If either of you are down late you shall have only bread and butter for breakfast."

Fred snatched his clothes together in any temper but the best, and went into his mother's room, while mamma heard a small voice saying :

"Bobboker 'awnts room alone to d'ess in, too."

"Mamma hasn't any more rooms to spare," said Mrs. Mayburn.

"Dimme one, den," said Bobboker.

"But I haven't any," replied mamma.

"Den dimme one."

"Mamma hasn't any, she told you."

"Well Bobboker 'awnts one."

"I haven't one."

"Dimme it, den,"

"How can I give you what I haven't got?"

"Dimme it 'ight away."

"Don't be silly, beeboy."

"Well I 'awnts anudder 'oom,"

"You—can't—have—it," said mamma with such emphasis that Bobboker looked up into her face in utter wonder. Then it occurred to him that mamma meant what she said, and an angrier little boy than Bobboker was for a minute or two after that was a something that mamma could scarcely imagine. He cried, and screamed, and yelled, and howled, and wailed, and when mamma tried to pacify him he snarled like any dreadful little dog might have done. Finally, when he was conquered by a promise of a lump of sugar at the breakfast-table, and mamma turned her head to see whether Bertha was dressing, she saw Fred prowling aimlessly and half-dressed about the room, while Bertha was invisible.

"What are you doing, my boy? Why are you in this room again? Where is your sister?" asked Mrs. Mayburn.

"I don't know where she is, and I'm looking for one of my shoes; I guess I dropped it when I picked up my clothes," said Fred.

"Find it quickly, Freddie, there's a darling; I'd like you to finish dressing the beeboy while I go see how Bridget is getting on with breakfast."

"Well, I'd like to know who took my shoe. I believe Bertha's hid it just because she's ugly. I can't dress

without shoes. Bobboker, have you had buvver F'eds s'oo?"

"Idono," said Bobboker.

"You ought to know."

"Sh—h—h!" said mamma. "Put slippers on—Sunday shoes—anything, but be quick. If breakfast isn't ready in time, papa will be dreadfully bothered. What are you doing?"

"Looking for my shoe, I tell you," said Fred, very sharply, as he languidly turned over spools, thimbles, scissors, etc., in mamma's work-basket.

"Did you ever find a shoe in my work-basket, and do you suppose one could be hidden under those little things?"

"Well"—began Fred; but somehow he could find no excuse for his absent-mindedness, so he sneaked back toward the room in which he had been dressing. Suddenly he stumbled and howled; looking to see what had caught his foot, he saw the missing shoe lying just where he had dropped it five minutes before. Fred was so ashamed of himself then that he felt he must do something unusual, so, without intending anything of the sort, he dressed himself quite rapidly. Meanwhile, Bobboker was nearly dressed, and mamma leaving him in care of Fred, hurried

toward the kitchen. The cook was doing reasonably well; true, she had forgotten to go to the butcher, only a block away, for the chops which he had promised to have ready for the Mayburns at precisely seven, but she had cut a slice of ham and put it on to broil. Then, finding there were no eggs, she had hurried out to the grocer's, and the ham had begun to burn in her absence; but mamma reached the kitchen in time to save it. Papa afterward said, at the breakfast-table, that if there was anything he hated it was meat with the slightest burnt taste about it; but one thing mamma would never do, not if she had to cut her tongue out to keep from it, and that was to talk to her husband about the servants; so she merely said it was a shame, but one never could be sure of the exact heat to broil by.

After making sure that breakfast would be on the table in time, mamma hurried above to see that the children were ready to descend when the bell should ring. As she ascended, she saw Bertha emerging from the guest-chamber.

"What are you doing in that room, my daughter?"

"Dressing—in a room all alone by myself; you let Fred do it."

Mamma began to say something, but two or three people seemed to be saying so much in her own room that she hurried to learn what it all was about. Opening the door, she found Bobboker on the floor crying very loudly, The Jefful in Fred's arms crying in a way that showed she was not to be outdone by any three-year-old boy, while Fred was rocking wildly to and fro in a rocking-chair, and singing,

“We'll stand the storm—it won't be long.”

“Oh, what *is* the matter?” cried mamma, hurrying to Bobboker's aid.

“Mom—mom— mom— mom— mom,” explained The Jefful.

“Why, baby cried in there,” said Fred, “and I put Bobboker on the lounge and went to get her, and —”

“An' bad o' lounge fwoed Bobboker 'ight off on f'oor an' f'oor tummed up an' hitted him,” said Bobboker, continuing his brother's explanation. And F'ddy tumfitted Jefful an' didn't tummfitt Bobboker at-alle-talle.” And Bobboker proceeded to finish his cry, but mamma took him in her arms and quieted him, and said:

“Freddie, dear, you don't hold baby nicely ; you have her feet and head nearly touching each other ; no wonder she cries.”

"Goodness!" exclaimed Fred; "she ought to be thankful to be held in any way. I'm almost dead with holding and singing to her this two or three hours."

"Does the time seem so long to you, poor little fellow?" said mamma, managing to get baby in one arm, while she held Bobboker in the other. "It seems so to me sometimes, when everybody is crying and needing attention at the same time. Now wash your face, and brush your hair before the bell rings—there!—it's ringing now!"

Fred dashed toward the basin, and mamma, laying baby on the lounge, hurried to brush Bobboker's hair. Somehow the brush was not equal to the requirements made upon it, for Bobboker's hair was long and thick, so mamma tried a comb. Out came a great snarl from the matted hair and an ear-piercing shriek from Bobboker's lips.

"Put Bobboker's head on again!" screamed the little boy.

"Oh, did bad mamma hurt her dear little beeboy?" said mamma, dropping the comb and kissing the child; "well, she shan't do it any more; there," and mamma tried with her hands to put the larger tangles on whatever part of the head they rightly belonged to, fixing them in place with the wet brush.

"Come, pet, aren't you ready?" shouted a manly voice from somewhere below.

"Right away, dear," replied mamma, "Run, Freddie and tell Bridget to hurry upstairs to baby."

"I can't find my necktie," said Fred.

Mamma stood Bobboker on the floor, snatched a ribbon from a drawer, tied it about Fred's neck, and pushed him toward the door; then she picked up Bobboker and hurried down-stairs, where papa, who was in his seat at the foot of the table, remarked :

"We're ten minutes late again, little girl. I wish we could be more punctual."

Mamma looked at the lid of the coffee-pot, and the lid did not melt, which showed what excellent metal it was made of. As soon as mamma and the three children were seated, papa asked a blessing, and all mamma knew about it was that she shut her eyes and remembered that she had not dressed her own hair and that she had forgotten to tell Bridget not to move out the children's bed again without replacing the castor that had dropped from one of the legs, leaving the latter to stump, so to speak, across and through the matting. Papa completed his devotional exercise before mamma got through wondering whether there was or was not in the store-room a piece of matting that would replace the width ruined by the leg of the bed, but Bobboker recalled her to present scenes by pulling her sleeve and saying :

"Mamma, 'oor py'ate is 'ooked down to enough ;" while papa laughed, and said :

"Any time to-day will do for my coffee, little girl."

Mamma poured two cups of coffee hastily and took a sip from one, for it did seem as if she would break in two unless she swallowed something at once. Then she served and put sugar and milk on three saucers of oat-meal, poured three cups of milk, reminded Fred that he had not put on his napkin, helped her husband from the side dishes nearest her, and began to cut a mouthful from the fragment of ham her husband had passed her, when back came Fred's saucer for more oatmeal; Bertha's saucer followed, and then Bobboker remembered the promised lump of sugar. A second cup of coffee for Mr. Mayburn consumed a minute or two; Bertha's meat had to be cut for her, because she was quite awkward with knife and fork, but finally mamma got that mouthful of meat to her lips, and was buttering a piece of bread, when Bobboker remarked :

"'Awnt mamma to wheed Bobboker."

"Mamma's beeboy feed himself, like a great big man," suggested mamma, as she bit industriously at the bread.

"Bobboker isn't big manny; Bobboker dot saw om."

(Sore arm.)

This was too much for mamma, for Bobboker's right shoulder had once been dislocated, and he had been told of it so often, in sympathetic terms, that he was disposed to rate the accident at its full value. So mamma took the spoon, and fed the little fellow, and between two mouthfuls he said, "Dee mamma," which for the moment comforted mamma more than a full meal could have done. But she knew that as foundation for a busy morning a full heart could not take the place of an empty stomach, so she again attempted to get something from her plate, and succeeded to the extent of a mouthful or two of meat and a single piece of fried potato, when Bobboker protested; said he,

"Bobboker tummuk aw empaty some more."

Everybody laughed at this, but papa was thoughtful enough of the family welfare to say:

"Do see that he eats enough, won't you, dear?"

"Oh, yes!" said mamma, in such a way that papa looked up in surprise, upon which mamma looked down without being able to see distinctly for a moment. But her husband was finishing his breakfast; he would go in a moment, and not return for several hours; he was her husband—her dearest—and somehow she had hardly seen him or spoken to him that morning. She wanted to say

something or hear him say something before he went, but her head was in such a tired whirl, that she could not think of anything to say—not, it seemed, if she were to die for not doing it. At last she succeeded in asking

“What is the news this morning?”

“Oh, nothing—yes, there is too : such a jolly row between the Mayor and the Police Commissioners. Just let me read you a bit of it.” And papa read, in merry humor, a scene from the proceedings, and laughed so heartily, that mamma, like the good wife that she was, laughed too, though she wondered what there was funny or even interesting in the story.

“There!” said papa, suddenly pocketing the paper, and arising from the table, “this isn’t business. I must be off—bye-bye.” Papa kissed each of the children hastily, touching his lips to brow, nose, or hair according to whatever was the easiest spot to reach. He devoted a little more time to mamma, stooping over her, and putting an arm about her neck ; when he started to go, he found one of mamma’s arms around his waist as tightly as if it intended to remain there, and mamma’s head was leaning against him, as if it, too, wanted to stay.

“Bless you, pet,” said papa, “you do love me, don’t you ?”

"Love you!" exclaimed mamma. Then she held him tighter, and he stroked her hair, and Bobboker remarked :

"Mamma mus' not 'pash wawtoo in her facey;" at which papa looked down for an explanation, and saw that mamma was crying. The tears were promptly kissed out of her eyes, but more came, and papa asked :

"My poor little girl, what is the matter?"

Mamma swallowed something that was not food, and answered,

"Oh, nothing—yes—a great deal. I wish we ever had any time together."

"Why, we have every evening together," said papa.

"Yes," said mamma. It was not the word, but the tone in which she said it, that made papa look at her inquiringly, tenderly, pityingly, irresolutely, and then to press her head tightly against him. Both were quiet for a moment; then papa looked at the clock kissed his wife again, whispered, "Poor little girl," and hurried off to his business, though, as he donned his overcoat and hat in the hall, he said something in a low tone, to the man in the hat-rack mirror, about the peculiar ways of women.

Papa had hardly left the dining-room when Fred got out of his chair, and, hurrying to mamma's side, hugged

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her and kissed her most tenderly, though he said not a word ; then he pressed his soft cheek to mamma's cheek, at which mamma's eyes broke down again ; but she pushed back her chair and dragged Fred up into her lap and gave back to him all his kisses and embraces, and said :

" Mamma's darling—mamma's friend—mamma's dear great heart."

" I don't know what you're crying about," said Fred, as soon as he was allowed breath enough to speak with ; " but I'm awful sorry for you. Are you sick ? "

" No, dear old fellow—only tired—oh, so tired ! "

" What makes you so tired ? " asked Fred.

" Oh, baby—and little children who won't dress themselves in the morning without being continually watched and scolded by mamma."

" Well, mamma," said Fred, sitting upright and looking honestly into her eyes, " I didn't see that shoe this morning until I stumbled right over it."

" You weren't looking for it, little boy ; that is the reason you didn't find it. If you would only keep your mind upon whatever you have to do, mamma would be saved thousands of troubles."

" Well, I put my mind on things, but it comes right off

again when I don't know anything about it," explained Fred.

While mamma had been caressing Fred and talking with him, she had felt one of her cheeks being kissed, and an arm about her neck which she knew was Bertha's; but she affected not to notice either while it seemed she could do something toward reforming Fred. The boy's reply, however, was more than she could answer at once, so she put an arm around Bertha, and Bertha tried to climb into her lap, and mamma worked Fred to one side and dragged Bertha up on the other side, and Bertha scrutinized the entire operation until she was satisfied that she was as completely in mamma's lap as Fred was; then both children sat there like a double-backed chair weighing a hundred pounds, and so ricketty that it took both of mamma's arms to hold it together. The proceeding did not escape the notice of another member of the family, who exclaimed :

"Bobboker 'awnts to det in mamma's 'ap too."

"Darlings," said mamma, as she rather abruptly spilled the children, one on each side, "mamma's afraid you'll have to get down; she can't hold three at a time."

"Bobboker," said Fred, with a pout, "you're a selfish, piggish little thing."

"He always wants to do what he sees any one else do," said Bertha.

"Sh—h—h!" said mamma. "Doesn't my little girl want to do whatever Fred does? And, Fred, you must never call little people bad names. Mamma might call you worse names, if she judged your character by your actions."

"But don't you see, mamma," explained Bertha, "I'm a twins, and Bobboker isn't."

"Well," said Fred going around to Bobboker's chair and putting his arm around his little brother's neck, curls and all, "he's a ignorant 'ittle sweets, an' budder s'ant boose him."

"Ow—ye—nyga!" screamed Bobboker.

"There!" exclaimed Fred, retiring promptly; "just see how hateful he is when I try to love him!"

"Your arm pulled his hair," said mamma.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Fred; "something's *always* doing something to that young one,"

"Tell him you didn't mean to hurt him—pet him a little," said mamma; but Fred had already whisked out of the room, so mamma explained in his stead, and pacified her beeboy. Then she looked at her plate again, and did

not seem particularly pleased at what she saw, for the ham was glued down by cold gravy and the slices of fried potatoes had warped, like scraps of leather that had lain in the sun. But she finished her slice of bread, and tasted the coffee to find it had grown cold and of that sickish sweetness which some sugar causes when it has been in solution for a few moments ; so she poured a fresh cup, drank it in haste, took Bobboker and went upstairs to relieve Bridget, first reminding Bertha that within half an hour she and Fred must start for school.

Reaching her own room, mamma found her bed neatly made. She disliked to disarrange neatly made beds ; nevertheless she dropped down upon her couch, taking baby with her, while Bobboker climbed up on the other side, putting one elbow upon mamma's waist, and one hand around her neck, which tickled her terribly. As for The Jefful, she smacked her lips, and looked inquiringly at mamma, and put her thumb in her mouth, and took it out and smacked her lips again.

“ Dear, dear ! ” sighed mamma, “ I've forgotten to bring baby her breakfast. Will mamma's beeboy go down to Bridget and ask her for a cup of milk and some crackers for the baby ? ”

"I ca't," said Bobboker, who did not know how to say "can't."

"Oh, do—for poor tired mamma?"

"I ca't—Bobboker wants to lom you."

"You can love me all you like when you come back," said mamma.

"I ca't."

"Please?"

"Mus'n't say 'p'ease' to Bobboker—makes Bobboker k'y."

"Well, you shall cry all you like when you bring the baby's breakfast."

"I ca't—awnts to k'y now."

"Well, cry—cry ever so much, and then get the baby's breakfast."

This permission rather mystified Bobboker, and he looked at mamma very sternly, but her face did not change, so the child scrambled off the bed and disappeared. Then The Jefful asked again, and more emphatically, for her breakfast, and mamma played with her so as to make her temporarily forget her physical needs. This plan succeeded for several moments, but The Jefful's monitor within suddenly prompted her, while right in the middle of a merry crow, to return to life's duties, and she did not hold her peace a second until mamma arose, took her on

her shoulder, and descended to the dining-room, where she found Bobboker taking the scraps from the various plates and putting them where children imagine such things will do the most good, while Bridget was eating industriously and apparently ignoring the child's existence. Now Bobboker's digestion was anything but good, as Bridget had been told some scores of times, and ham was a little the worst thing it could attempt ; so mamma exclaimed :

“ Oh, Bridget ! How could you let him stuff those dreadful scraps ? And why didn't you send him back with the baby's breakfast ? ”

Bridget started as if from profound slumber, and shouted :

“ Ah, ye bad little bye—fot are ye doin' ? Baby's breakfast, is it, mem ? How was I to know ye didn't take it' up yersel' ? ”

“ I told him to ask you for it—the baby was screaming,” said mamma.

“ Never a bit was he afther askin' for, barrin' a lump av sugar.”

“ I hope you didn't give to him. He's already had one.”

“ Well, to tell ye the truth, mem,” said Bridget, “ he lukked that wistful that I gave him two.”

where various e such eating s exist- t good, d ham mamma those n back r, and Baby's didn't ream- mp av one." t, "he

"Dear, dear!" sighed mamma, and sat down to feed the baby. Mamma had just crumbled two or three crackers into the milk, and The Jefful had not made more than six ineffectual attempts to clutch the cup, and spring out of mamma's lap, and break her precious little neck, when mamma happened to notice the clock, and to see that the time for the children to start for school was a scant quarter of an hour distant; so she shouted:

"Bertha!"

There was no response; so she called:

"Freddie!"

Then she repeated each name two or three times, startling baby each time into wonderment and a general drizzling of milk out of the corner of her pretty little mouth.

"I'll find 'em for you, mem," said Bridget, starting up from the table.

"Oh, thank you!" said mamma, continuing, as the domestic disappeared: "You're a real comfort, though sometimes you'd provoke the temper of a Job."

Within five minutes Bridget returned with Bertha, whom she had found hammering the piano.

"Are you ready for school, my child? And where is your brother?"

"I don't know."

"Find him at once. Both of you get ready, and come and show yourselves to me before you start."

Bertha disappeared, and five minutes later Fred bounced into the dining-room with:

"Mamma, have you had my spelling-book?"

"What should I want of your spelling-book, my boy?"

Fred looked rather sheepish, but said he wished he knew who had taken it.

"Where did you put it when you came home yesterday?" asked mamma.

"Nowhere."

"Where have you looked for it?"

"Everywhere."

"Where are your other books?"

"I don't know."

"Did you bring them home from school?"

"Certainly — I — anyhow — no, I didn't either."

"Now, hurry on your cap and overcoat, and come back to me."

Shame imparted haste to Fred; he was back within five minutes, bringing Bertha with him.

"Now kiss us good-bye," said Fred, hitting mamma's face all at once with his forehead, nose, and chin.

"Stop a moment," said mamma. "There's a button

about to drop from your overcoat. Run upstairs, and get me my work-basket, quick. Oh, Bertha, the toes of your shoes are almost white ; go get me the bottle of polish."

While mamma had been talking, The Jefful had been bouncing and climbing about at a great rate, but absence of the other children gave the youngest an opportunity to appease her hunger, and even to give a caress or two to mamma, who was too nervous to notice them. Then Fred returned with the work-basket and Bertha with the polish, and both thrust their burdens into mamma's face, and then the button was sewed on without much assistance from the baby's hands that tugged at the maternal sleeve, and Bertha blacked the toes of her shoes and the tips of her fingers so that she had to seek a basin of water ; and Fred, without saying anything about it, hurried off to school alone, for fear of being late and getting a mark against him, and he left the front door open ; and Bertha, while searching for him, happened to look out the door, and saw him a square away ; so she returned to mamma to complain and have a good cry, and mamma unsympathetically mopped her eyes, and started her after him, after which she cuddled the baby very close, and sat for some moments with her eyes shut, trying to collect her thoughts, but not succeeding particularly well.

Of one thing she was very certain : if she did not at once wash and dress her baby, she would be late with her marketing, which meant a late dinner, which papa, who preferred dinner at midday, could not endure, for he had none too much time at noon. So she took The Jefful upstairs into her neat, warm, light, sunny room, and placed a basin of warm water on the table, and with it the soap and sponge, and powder, and towels, and napkins, and comb and brush, and laid clean clothing upon a chair, within easy reach, and The Jefful shrieked with delight as each article was placed, for to be washed and dressed seemed to delight her almost as much as to eat. What an excitement she broke into as mamma removed her night-clothing ! She frantically gripped the insides of her sleeves, as the little nightgown was being taken off ; she tried to unbutton her own shoes, and when mamma gave her one of the shoes to pacify her, she sucked ecstatically at the toe of it. She pinched her little stockings with her wee toes, and then kicked them vigorously ; she wiggled and twisted all sorts of ways as her little shirt was being removed, and when, finally, that small garment was drawn entirely off from the little head it had obscured for a moment, and mamma said, " Peep bo !" The Jefful burst into a merry, melodious peal of laughter

that broke mamma's face into countless smiles, and made her a hundred times lovelier to behold than the handsome girl her husband had married ten years before.

And the bath—oh ! First The Jefful's face and head were washed, which she did not particularly enjoy, for water got into her eyes, and mamma firmly refused to allow her to suck the sponge, though the baby fought hard for it. But when the little face was wiped dry, and as much of the remainder of The Jefful as the basin could accommodate was placed therein—oh, bliss, bliss, bliss ! She kicked, and squealed, and paddled, and crowed, and wiggled, and exulted in all the languages she knew, and twisted, and grasped the rim of the basin, and tried to drink, and tumbled forward, and began to cry, but changed to a laugh, and grinned at mamma, and turned her head to see if any one else was enjoying the fun ; and then she did it all over again, varying the order of exercises somewhat, but not omitting a single number of the programme. Once, indeed, she went into such an ecstasy that she had to throw her head back to express it all ; mamma's hand was behind her, but the little back was slippery with water, and The Jefful twitched so convulsively, that backward she went, slipping about in the water until her feet and hands and head and a frightened

howl all went up into the air at the same time. But mamma rescued her, and listened to her frightened explanations, and reassured her, so that back she went again, until mamma was afraid to leave her in the water any longer. Then she was laid upon a dry warm towel in mamma's lap, and another was placed over her, and she was gently pressed and rubbed until quite dry, and then she was powdered ; after which mamma kissed her so thoroughly that she looked like a statue that had been pelted with roses which had forgotten to take their tints with them as they dropped away. Then she was dressed, though not without considerable remonstrance ; and her flossy hair was brushed into a general fuzz of tiny curls, and she dropped a little sigh and subsided quietly into mamma's arms, and within five minutes she was fast asleep, with such a—oh ! such a sweet mouth uttering gentle aspirations and delicate perfume, and mamma pronounced herself the happiest woman that had ever lived, and wondered what she had felt bad about that morning, when suddenly the hateful little clock struck half-past nine, and the noon-day roast was still at the butcher's.

Mamma made haste to don cloak and hat and start to select the *piece de resistance* of the noonday dinner ; but, as she was about to leave the house, she remembered that

she had not seen Bobboker for an hour. As she had not heard him scream—as she or any one in the house was certain to do when Bobboker raised his voice—she felt assured that he had not suffered any personal harm ; but Bobboker's mischief-making was not at all of that sentimental variety that injures only the maker, so mamma made a hasty search of the house. In answer to a call through the dumb-waiter shaft, she was informed by Bridget that the boy was not in the kitchen ; so the parlor floor was quickly inspected, and then the main chambers without disclosing any misdeeds or even Bobboker. Then mamma became frightened ; perhaps he had found his way through the front door while the children had it open. This suspicion set mamma simply wild, for Bobboker had beautiful yellow curls, that beggars and tramps always noticed, and perhaps some of them had stolen him away so as to shear his head. And what would they do with him after they had stolen his gold ? Would they be remorseful enough to bring him back ? Perhaps they had found him at some distance from home, for three-year-old boys can travel very fast when none of their family is watching them. In such a case, what ? Would they give him to some dreadful creature in the Five Points, to be brought up a beggar ? Mamma was nearly

frantic with her succession of thoughts ; she actually ran from room to room, looking into closets and under beds and shouting :

“ Bobboker ! Mamma’s beeboy ! ”

Suddenly, in one of the halls, she encountered Bridget with a compound grin agitating all her features.

“ Wud ye come below, mem ? ” asked Bridget.

“ Is it my boy—is it ? ” asked mamma.

“ It is, mem,” said Bridget leading the way down-stairs. Mamma was so happy at the sudden cessation of her fears as to be unable to say a word ; as for Bridget, she emitted some terribly vocal explosives at irregular intervals until she reached the kitchen floor. Then, putting her finger to her lips and moving on tiptoe, she led mamma to the cellar, where by the dim light of a single gas-burner, mamma saw her beeboy in the coal heap, apparently the happiest and dirtiest little scamp on the American continent. Then the laughs and exclamations which Bridget had been holding in for a moment or two burst out altogether in one terrific, volcanic guffaw that caused Bobboker to jump as nearly out of his little skin as was physiologically possible. Mamma snatched him into her arms at once, and exclaimed :

“ You darling, bad, sweet, filthy, little precious, don’t

you know that coal heaps are not fit places for mamma's nice little beeboy to play in?"

"Coal is all lovully," said Bobboker, putting his arms around his mamma's neck; "all byack an' shiny yike papa's Sunday hat."

Mamma took the child into the kitchen, looked him over, said "Oh, my!" and asked Bridget to keep him out of mischief until she came back from the market and could change his clothing and complexion.

As she left the house, she readjusted her cloak, for it seemed that lifting Bobboker had disarranged her attire in every way, and she furtively felt the button at her throat immediately after passing a lady who had seemed to scrutinize it. Mamma herself thought the button was a little bit to one side, so she twitched gently the other way; and then it seemed she must have been a little too vigorous, for the next lady she met seemed also to look closely at that same button. Then mamma grew nervous about her cloak; she looked down the line of buttons on the front, and the line seemed to deflect a little to the right—no, to the left—no,—well, she could not for the life of her tell which way, but of one thing she was certain: whichever it was, it was perfectly dreadful, and other ladies, who were probably mothers and house-

keepers like herself, ought to be ashamed of themselves to notice such things so closely and make her so uncomfortable. If it had been afternoon or Sunday, when she, like other ladies, took pains to appear as well as possible, she would not care how much they might look at her ; she considered her taste about as correct as that of most ladies.

How long she might have gone on increasing her discomfort of mind nobody knows, had she not reached the market, where she delivered her order quite shortly, instead of waiting to take careful personal selection, as was her usual custom. Then she dropped into the confectioner's, as Bobboker always expected her to do when she went out for a few moments. But the old lady who dispensed candies also seemed attracted by that cloak button at the throat, and all of mamma's uncomfortable feelings came back in one big wave, with a gust of anger to drive it along. Then the old lady leaned across the counter, and whispered confidentially :

“ There's a speck on your chin, ma'am, you'll find a mirror and basin in the ice-cream room.”

Mamma disappeared abruptly between the curtains of the little saloon ; the distance from the counter to the mirror was scarcely half a dozen steps, but mamma had

time to imagine what each person had thought who had seen her. A speck? In the little mirror she saw a black mark on lower cheek, chin, and throat; it seemed to mamma to be fully three feet long, and it really was fully three inches, and just the width of the smudgy little forefinger that Hobboker had unconsciously passed across his mamma's face as he put his arm around her neck when taken from the coal heap. Oh! Mamma took towel and soap and washed away that dreadful streak until it was replaced by a very red one; then she left the shop so quickly that she barely remembered to say "Thank you," and forgot the candy entirely. She might have known that she would not be likely to meet either of those enraging women on the block and a half between the confectioner's and her house; but do what she would, her cheeks would blaze with shame and her eyes with anger as she walked along. Worse yet, she was met by a veteran beau, who was always elegant and polite, but whom she detested, and he complimented her elaborately upon her charming complexion. She got inside her own door before the cry came on, but without a single second to spare; and then she sat right down upon the bottom step of the stairway in the hall, and forgot husband and children and even The Jefful, and

wished that she had never, never, never in the world been married. She admitted that now it was too late to change ; but if a daughter of hers ever wanted to marry, she would lock her up until some millionaire came along ; and even he shouldn't have her until mamma herself had selected and trained a large force of servants. As for Bobboker, he was growing altogether too old to play in such dirty places, and ought to be punished ; he deserved to be slapped for going into that coal heap and——

By this time mamma had mechanically arisen and gone to the kitchen to instruct Bridget about dinner ; as she opened the door, Bobboker heard her, looked around with a smile too angelic to be affected by the dirt on his face, and said, in the most rapturous way :

“ Oh, dayzh mamma ! ”

And mamma—heaven be devoutedly praised for love's inconsistencies !—mamma caught the little scamp in her arms, and kissed him soundly without noting or caring whether her lips touched Bobboker or coal dust.

Of one thing, at any rate, she was certain ; before The Jefful would wake, and the children and her husband return, she would have two full hours to give to that party dress, of which the facing had worn in holes that would persist in turning upward whenever she happened to see

the end of the train in a parlor. So she left Bobboker with Bridget, and hurried upstairs and to work. She began ripping the binding from the bottom of the skirt, and was getting along nicely, considering the tediousness of the work, when, just after eleven o'clock, Bridget brought up a card, from which mamma read, "Mrs Marston Ballamore."

Mamma thought a great many things all at once. She did wish that ladies like Mrs. Marston Ballamore, who were rich and always faultlessly dressed, would call on the afternoons of her reception-days, when mamma was sure to be well dressed herself, and could be certain that her parlor was in perfect order. But now, with the parlor probably in the disorder in which she and her husband had left it the night before, after lounging in it all evening; with the piano littered with music, and a student-lamp at one side of the music-rack, with a newspaper for a mat. And she had nothing better than a rather common merino to wear down, for her handsome morning-robe—in which she thought she really looked as well as any one could in anything—had on one shoulder a stain of rhubarb syrup, which The Jefful's lips had wiped upon it a morning or two before. But repining did no good; so mamma put on the merino dress, and

did what she could in a moment or two with her hair, and wiped the lint and dust of the tipping from her fingers with a damp towel, and descended to the parlor to apologize for neglecting Mrs. Marston Ballamore so long. But Mrs. Marston Ballamore had not been neglected, for Bobboker was devoting himself to her. He had followed Bridget up stairs when the bell rang, and as he could not travel as fast as Bridget could, he had entered the parlor just as the domestic had reached his mamma. When mamma appeared, he was doing his very best to entertain the visitor, and the grace with which Mrs. Marston Ballamore was accepting and returning his courtesies, without allowing him to come within reach of her dress or her gloved hands, which latter seemed particularly to delight him, would have been very entertaining to mamma, had her æsthetic tastes been in that reposeful balance which is so necessary to the proper estimating of social amenities. As it was, mamma flushed deeply, banished the little fellow with great celerity, closed the door against him, and explained painfully to the visitor, while Bobboker remonstrated most vociferously through the crack of the door. Mamma thought Bridget might hear him and take him away, but Bridget was chopping the stuffing for the leg of lamb which mamma had ordered

for dinner ; so mamma excused herself for an instant, and called Bridget through the dining-room pipe, returned to have Mrs. Marston Ballamore tell her what a vivacious, intelligent little fellow Bobboker was, and to think that, of all detestable things in the world, the attempts of society women to smooth over the things they particularly disliked was the worst. She recovered her temper and her wits, however, under the influence of the older lady's good-heartedness and tact, and spent a really enjoyable quarter hour. As for Mrs. Marston Ballamore, when she finally stepped into her carriage, she exchanged her company face for a very sober one, as she wished that her own married daughter had as healthful a face, as decided a character, and as fine children as Mrs. Mayburn's. But mamma knew nothing of this, and thought only that she hoped that, when she reached Mrs. Ballamore's age, she might have only full-grown children, so that she also might be able to appear as if she never had anything to disarrange either dress or temper.

Back to that dress facing went mamma ; but, before she seated herself, she heard in the adjoining room a very sweet voice remarking :

“Obboo gobboo yabby yabbee ah hoo um boo baa.
Iddy, iddy, iddy, iddy,”

There was no Greek or other unknown tongue to mamma about this ; it was perfectly intelligible, and it meant that The Jefful was beginning to get ready to begin to want to get up. Then there was a spirited race between mamma and The Jefful, the former endeavoring to get all the braid ripped off before the latter should reach that point where she might legitimately insist upon arising. Rip, rip, rip went the blade of mamma's little knife upon the stitches.

"Bibble, bubble—ob—ob—ob—ob!" said The Jefful, and again the little knife said :

"Rip, rip, rip."

"Attee pattee okky pokkey poo," remarked The Jefful, and the knife said :

"Rip, rip, rip—rip—rip."

Then The Jefful took a rest of about two minutes, and the knife gained nearly a yard before its antagonist resumed with :

"Uppee—chip—ah—wa wa wa."

"Rip, rip—r—r—r—r—r—r—ip."

"Boo ga. Ommul lummy ummy moo."

This was rather discouraging to the knife, for when The Jefful got to the vowels that caused her lips to protrude it generally indicated serious business ; so the knife went :

"R—r—r—r—r—r—r—r—rip—ip—ip."

Then The Jefful refreshed herself for a moment or two with her thumb, which gave the knife an advantage that it was not slow to improve. But there was something affrighting in The Jefful's next remark :

" Mom—mom—mom—mom—mom—mah ! "

The knife had but two more yards to go before completing its work, and away it flew, literally snapping out, as mamma drew the braid to its full tension.

" Rip—ip—ip—ip—ip—ip—ip—ip—ip."

" Ya ! " said The Jefful.

" Rip, rip, rip ! " replied the knife.

" Ya ! " repeated The Jefful ; then she jumped a whole octave and continued : " Ya—a—a—a—a—a—a—a Mom—mah ! "

By this time every nerve in mamma's body had got into that little knife. Physiologists may say " pooh ! " and explain that nerves cannot get into inanimate objects, but we know what we are talking about, and physiologists don't. Again The Jefful raised her voice and said :

" Ya—ya—ah—ee—ee—um—um—nga—ya—oobutty—ubbut—tub—tub—kupput non koo poo choo."

This stimulated mamma to the utmost ; she had only a scant yard to go—then only two feet—then only one—then only eight or nine inches. Just then The Jefful

started again, at which mamma gave a harder tug than usual at the braid ; and crack the braid flew backward to the full length of mamma's arm, tearing a strip several inches wide of the facing and silk and taking them with it. And that train had been none too long, either.

Mamma dropped—threw—that dress upon the floor, resisting a vulgar impulse to stamp and dance upon it, and the face that she wore as she started to take The Jefful boded nothing less than impalement and subsequent quartering to that offender. But as mamma passed through the door and The Jefful saw her—and she saw The Jefful —everything that could have been reasonably expected changed to the deadest of Dead Sea apples, for The Jefful crowed as joyously as a whole perch of little roosters would have done at the coming of the dawn, and mamma, the terrible, the enraged, the avenger, the despoiled, mamma took her baby into her arms and didn't care one particle whether the dress would be too short, or whether she could match the silk so as to cover the rent with a flounce ;—she simply didn't care for anything but her wee, pink-cheeked, bright-eyed laughing little Jefful.

•

NOON.

BUT the striking of the clock, whose hands had reached twelve, warned mamma of other joys to come ; so, after devoting a moment or two to her personal appearance, she took The Jefful on her shoulder, and went below to see that dinner should be on the table at 12:15 sharp, her husband being due at that time, and the children five or six minutes earlier, though they were seldom punctual. On this particular day they were, for on the way home they saw in a shop window the latest nice thing in candies, and they hurried to their mamma to demand a penny each. She promised to give them the money, after dinner, if they were washed, brushed, and in the dining room when the bell rang. Away they sped, and their haste occasioned some disagreement on the stairs. As the minutes flew, mamma flew also ; she dropped the baby in a corner of the kitchen that was out of the line of march between range, pantries, table, and dumb-waiter ; she gave the finishing touches to the gravy, and made the sauce for the pudding, and carried one or two

dishes to the dumb-waiter ; and even then the kitchen clock, which was daily regulated by papa's watch, marked 12:15 before the waiter was quite ready to ascend. Then a decided step was heard overhead, and it worked more and more in the direction of the dumb-waiter corner, and then the call-pipe emitted a whistle, that to the ear of mamma, which was then within a foot or two of it, was a little the most soul-piercing sound ever heard. But as soon as mamma could recover herself she shouted up the dumb-waiter shaft, "Yes, dear—right away !" and went upstairs and greeted her husband as smilingly and affectionately as if nothing had happened all morning long, and she had done nothing but sit still and long for her liege lord's return.

Papa was already in his chair, and Fred and Bertha were in theirs, but Bobboker was invisible, which caused mamma to be somewhat absent-minded. But she did all that was required of the head of the table, and then, while papa, whose head was down, was remarking, "Oh, whom do you suppose I saw this morning ?" mamma was at the dumb-waiter shaft, whispering down to Bridget that she wished she would run up stairs and find Bobboker, and get him presentable and to the table.

"Well," said papa, "as you don't seem to care to know, I——" Just then papa raised his head, missed mamma, and asked :

"Where *is* your mother, children?"

"Here I am, dear," said mamma, returning to her seat "I had to say a word to Bridget."

"I should think," said papa, after a sombre moment, "that a domestic should know her business well enough to leave you in peace at the dinner-table."

"It is no fault of hers, dear; I merely wanted her to find Bobboker."

Papa noted the empty high chair, and replied :

"She ought to know enough to send him to the table without being specially instructed."

"It's hardly her business, Will; she has had her hands full in getting dinner ready."

"Well, how much extra work would it be to get that little scamp ready for his dinner?"

"Not much, but——"

Papa paused for a reply, and finally asked :

"But what?"

"Oh, a great many things; you don't know how closely her time is occupied in the morning."

"Well, I've only this to say: if she were one of my men,

and it was her business to have that youngster at the table she would do it or walk." And papa felt so savage that he helped himself to another slice of lamb, although his plate was far from empty.

"Woman's work is different, dear," suggested mamma.

"Perhaps it is," said papa, after a moment or two of reflection. "I know one thing, though; I wish I could be a woman for just one day, and show other women how to run a house on business principles."

"I wish you could, dear." There was not a particle of anger, or sarcasm, or pique in mamma's tone as she said this, but somehow papa did not seem to regard the remark as sympathetic. Mamma saw that her husband was retiring within himself, which always was too much to endure when she saw so little of him, so she made haste to ask:

"Whom did you see to-day?"

"Oh," said papa, smoothing his brow, "it was my old classmate, Freindhoff. I hadn't seen the boy before in half a year."

Mamma was not particularly overjoyed to know who her husband's visitor had been. She had seen Freindhoff many times, and knew him for quite a noted analytic chemist, but as odd and absent-minded as a German

student could be. Had he not sat and smoked with her husband evenings innumerable, while the two men talked of college days and everything else in which she had not the slightest interest, both men apparently being utterly oblivious of her presence? Papa said that Freindhoff was as true as steel and one of the best fellows in the world; but she knew this much about him: he was neither ornamental nor courteous; he had literally robbed her of her husband many a time, and she hated the very sight of him. But she was determined to at least feign interest in her husband's friends, so she asked:

"How is he?"

"Oh, queer as ever. By the way, I asked him to spend the evening with us to-night. Don't forget to have some Limburger and beer for a little midnight lunch, will you?"

"No," said mamma, though she shuddered uncontrollably as she spoke, for the mere mention of the German delicacies recalled memories of odors which always made her deadly sick, much as she had tried to conquer natural repugnance for love's dear sake. One thing she knew: the evening was doomed, so far as her own pleasure was concerned, and she half wished that a sick headache or something would come to her rescue, and enable her to leave the two men to each other and their vile refresh-

ments, of which pipes of strong tobacco would form an important part. She would not hurt a fly—not she; she was tender-hearted enough to nurse all the invalid kittens that her children found in the streets, although she detested cats; but as for Freindhoff, she did not effectually resist a most unladylike willingness to hear that he had been taken dangerously ill, or even that he lay at death's door.

But if the Fiendhoof—that was the way mamma spelled his name in the privacy of her own thoughts—if he was to ruin her evening, she would at least make the most of her husband while she had him. So she talked of everything interesting she was able to recall, and compelled her husband, in spite of haste and hunger, to listen to her; and, finally, cajoled him into the sort of conversation which he enjoyed as dearly as she did, when he found himself fairly into it, and everything was going as it should between people who profess to love each other above all else, when papa smacked his lips suspiciously, and remarked :

“ That stupid Bridget has forgotten to put salt in the pudding ! What a shame ! ”

“ Oh, dear ! ” exclaimed mamma. “ Isn’t that provoking ? ”

"I should say it was," said papa. "It tastes as flat as a backwoods pancake."

"And I hurried my life nearly out to make the sauce for that pudding," remarked mamma.

Perhaps papa heard what she said; if he did, his palate dominated his heart; for, after a reluctant attempt or two to eat, he pushed his plate from him, and looked very glum. Fred remarked that he considered the pudding very good, and Bertha said "Um!" and passed her plate for more; but papa's original impressions remained unchanged, and it was in silence that he finally took his departure, though mamma followed him into the hall, and hung on his neck a moment, and got a kiss for her pains. Then she returned to the dining-room; but instead of taking her seat, and addressing herself to the meal which she had barely begun, she stood at the window and gazed out at the back fence, as if somewhere in that structure there was concealed the magic wand that could change domestic drudgery into conjugal felicity. The appearance of Bobboker, however, recalled her from the ideal to the real, particularly as the young man demanded pudding as the first course of his dinner.

"Children," said mamma, after abating Bobboker's pretensions, until he was willing to begin with the soup, "you've only twelve minutes."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Fred, "and I wanted some more pudding. Bertha had two plates."

"You also might have had two, had you not dawdled so long over your meat, cutting it into peculiar shapes."

"Well, I've time enough for another piece."

"Not a moment; you've barely time to reach school."

"Well, can't I have it when I come home?"

"No—yes, if you start this instant."

Away went Fred; and Bertha, after trembling irresolutely for a moment, as to whether to go with Fred, or be left behind, the latter being inevitable if she finished her pudding, attempted to accomplish both desires by cramming the remaining pudding into her mouth. A fit of choking naturally ensued, and mamma patted the child between her shoulders, and Fred remained to see that his sister was properly restored; and when Bertha at last breathed freely, there was five minutes of the noonday intermission remaining, and the school was six squares away.

"Mamma," suggested Fred, "don't you think we'd better stay home this afternoon! If we——"

"No, my son," said mamma, decidedly, "I do not."

"We'll be marked late, if we go," said Fred, "and I don't think that's fair to me when I hadn't anything to do with choking Bertha."

" You needn't have remained," said mamma. " If you had not stopped to beg for more pudding, you might have been at school by this time."

" And Bertha might have died," said Fred, " and her only twin brother away off at school. Oh, I think that would have been dreadful."

Mamma kissed Fred, but was none the less firm in her decision; so both children crawled out of the house, and strolled leisurely toward school, while mamma ate as if never before had she tasted a morsel of food. Fortunately Bobboker also was hungry—so hungry that he fed himself, and allowed mamma not only to dine, but to think peacefully for a few moments. Mamma needed time for thought almost as much as she needed food, for she had some dozens of things to be done, each one of which was as important as any other, and all needed attention at the earliest possible moment. The afternoon before her would be five hours long, which time, if unbroken by visitors, should suffice for the darning of the dozen or more pairs of small stockings that had been accumulating in her work-basket for a week or two. Deduct a quarter hour for the labour of getting Bobboker to bed for his afternoon nap, another quarter just before supper, in which to dress for the evening meal, a quarter

for The Jefful's various demands, and still one more for any probable caller, and there would yet remain four good hours. She felt strong enough to attack any household duty, for she had really eaten a full meal, for the first time in—well, ages.

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AFTERNOON.

THE first quarter hour mamma had admitted she would lose was to be spent in putting Bobboker to bed for his afternoon nap ; and this was how it began :

“ Beeboy it’s time for you to take your nap now,” said mamma.

“ ‘Tisn’t,” said Bobboker, very promptly.

“ Mustn’t contradict,” said mamma, kindly, but firmly.

“ *Isn’t contodick*,” replied the juvenile ; “ is Bobboker.”

“ Which dolly will you take to bed with you ? ” asked mamma, imagining that the diplomatic method would be successful, because once or twice before it had sufficed.

“ No dolly at-all-ey. Dollies is yadies, an’ yadies don’t go bedden daytimes.”

“ Oh, you’re mistaken, beeboy ; a great many ladies take naps by daylight, and a great many more wish they could ! ” And mamma, sighing as she thought of the necessities of a member of the latter class, continued ; “ Mamma would take a nap this afternoon if she could.”

“ Den why *don’t* you could ? ” asked Bobboker. “ You

can come on one side of my beddy, an' Bobboker will hing you aheep."

"Mamma has too much work to do, beeboy; she can't go to sleep until long, long after dark. Mamma wishes it were dark now—and that dreadful German gone," she added in a low tone.

"Make b'ieve it's dok," suggested Bobboker, "an' make b'ieve me's mamma; an' oo's Bobboker, an' me'll put oo a-bddy, an' hing oo to aheep. Tum on—kay me."

"Oh, you must take me, if you're going to be mamma."

Bobboker looked mystified, but soon got his natural face back, and admitted the impossibility of carrying out his plan in all particulars by taking mamma's hand, and saying:

"Tum on; Bobboker will 'ead his 'ittie beebee to the beddy. Beebees must walkee."

So mamma put down a hand, and Bobboker put one up, and led his passive charge to the bed-chamber; then he climbed upon mamma's bed, and tugged at her hand saying:

"Tum on."

Mamma dropped upon the bed and drew the edge of the coverings up over her boy.

"Tummer oo," commanded Bobboker.

"I ca't," whined mamma, imitating her little boy's favorite expression.

Bobboker looked at her very sternly ; he seemed to have a suspicion that the remark was not original, but as mamma complained that she was a poor, cold little baby, Bobboker disarranged the coverings at a great rate, crawling all over mamma as he did it, and planting elbows, hands, knees, heels and toes promiscuously about without regard to the purposes for which nature had designed the various portions of the maternal anatomy. Mamma endured a great deal with only inward remonstrance, but when the child, endeavoring to cover her feet, got one of his own feet in a position which raked both her eyes and nose, planted his knees firmly on her chest and one of his elbows on her stomach, she exclaimed :

"Oh, beeboy ! you're hurting me most cruelly."

Bobboker stopped short, turned his head, and asked :

"Fot 'oo say ?"

"You hurt me—dreadfully—oh !"

"Poo' mamma—poo' Bobboker, I mean," said the little fellow, turning on his hands and knees until his face was almost over mamma's, while he inflicted torments innumerable upon his victim. "Me kiss the p'ace an' make it well." So saying, he put a sympathetic face down to

mamma's and kissed her, his weight being thrown more and more upon his elbows and mamma's breast as he did so. He kissed mamma's lips two or three times, completely stopping her breath and utterance as he did so; and then he laid one of his soft cheeks against one of hers; but the instant the blockade of the maternal lips was raised, a loud shriek fell upon the child's ears and caused him to give a convulsive jump, which set elbows, knees, hands and feet at one grand concentrative torture that elicited scream after scream, during one of which the young man found himself first turning in the air, and then landing forcibly upon his back on the bed beside his mamma. Did ever affection meet such cruel discouragement? Bobboker thought not—indeed he was sure of it; so he raised his own voice in a way that made the chandelier quiver.

"What is the matter with mamma's darling beeboy?" asked mamma, as soon as anything could be heard.

"He fee's bad—lomme bit," said Bobboker. "He isn't goin' to be mamma not no mawey an' be 'boosed awfoo'!"

"Bobboker must be more careful, darling," said mamma.

"Don't 'awnt to be tareho," screamed Bobboker.
" 'Oon't be tareho'—ya—ya—ngya!"

"You don't want to hurt poor, dear mamma, who does everything she can for her Bobboker, do you?" asked mamma.

"Ess—'awnts to hyte 'oo—'awnts to hyte evv'ybody—boo, hoo, hoo!"

"Then you had better hurt that naughty, naughty little boy, Bobboker," said mamma, "and I will leave you to do it," and mamma arose and departed.

What would not any tenor of Her Majesty's opera company—any soprano, even—give to be able to reach and sustain a high note as Bobboker did when mamma departed and left him alone? Mamma herself, who had heard Campanini, Capoul, Nilsson, Albani, Gerster, and all the rest, stopped and listened admiringly, and then with apprehension, for where did all the breath come from, and when and how could it be replaced? The sound finally ceased as abruptly as if it were broken cleanly from what had preceeded, and mamma, hearing nothing for a moment, imagined suffocation, and flew to her child's relief. Just as she opened the door the plaint was resumed; it had been transposed to a minor key, but was no less wonderful in regard to volume and sustained effort. When the exclamation ceased, it was followed by the single word "mamma!" executed upon a

single note, and prolonged so successfully that again mamma admired. But she knew that any excitement, such as her boy's utterance indicated, would be fatal to sleep unless allayed at once ; so she hurried into the room, and was greeted with :

“Lomme bit—Bobboker got saw om.”

Mamma felt guilty at once ; what might that dislocated shoulder have been suffering while she had been selfishly moaning over her own physical miseries ? So she told him that mamma was perfectly dreadful—a most terrible, hideous monster—and that Bobboker was a sweet little abused angel ; and Bobboker gradually brought himself to accept her apologies, and took her hand tightly in both his own, and gasped less and less dreadfully and finally said :

“Tell me tawwy.”

Mamma told him about “Little Red Riding Hood.”

“Now temme 'nudder.”

Mamma related the experience of “Hop-o'-my-thumb.”

“Temme 'nudder.”

Mamma rendered in prose the immortal “Hey diddle diddle.”

“I 'awnts anudder”

Then mamma gave “The Babes in the Wood.”

“'Nudder one.”

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Mamma varied the monotony of recitation by singing "The Mulberry Bush." Bobboker listened respectfully, but, as the last note dropped from mamma's lips, he said:

"Mustn't do dat aden ; don't awnt hongs—awnt tawwies."

"Poor mamma is so tired of telling stories, beeboy," said the victim. "You tell mamma a story, and rest her."

"Wayo, I weeyo," said Bobboker, after a moment of deliberation. "Mus' be vayyey tilly, vo. Once was a man, his name Hoppyfum, an' he an' a diss went an' wundead away wif de moon ; but a wolf saw him, an' to'd him not to kay dat moon way offey, 'tause his mamma touldn't find it no mawwy, an' would 'pank him if he yawst it. So de wolf went to see his gandymudder wif a 'ittle wed bonnet on, and the gandymudder an' de wolf jus' 'ike two 'ittie Jeffuls, and deir mudder came along an' gave 'em some b'ed an' mi'k when they woke up, an' a 'ittle dog tuvvered 'em all up wif yeaves, an' hung 'em up to h'eep. Ven dey got up dey danced awound a muwwy goosh.

"Are you sure you have the story right, beeboy ?" asked mamma.

"Idono," said Bobboker, after looking wonderingly at his mamma.

"Did the dish really run away with the moon?"

"Idono."

"What did the dish run away with, then?"

"Idono."

"Then what does my beeboy know?"

"Idono."

Conversation came naturally to a deadlock after Bobboker's last speech; so mamma patted the beeboy's cheek, and informed him that he was a darling, and that now it was time for him to go to sleep. But Bobboker corrected her.

"I 'hink I ought to be cawwied awound a ittie bittie, an' be hinged to," said he.

"Why, mamma did sing to her beeboy. Don't he remember? Mamma sang 'The Mulberry Bush.'"

Bobboker reflected, and replied:

"'Murry Goosh' was only *one* 'hing—'awnts *yots* of 'hings."

"After my beeboy takes his nap and wakes up again, he shall have as many songs as he wants," said mamma.

"Don't 'awnt 'em den—'awnts 'em now. Bobboker maybe wouldn't 'ake up at all-ey, all-ey; den 'ouldn't get any hongs a bittie."

"Oh, my beeboy will wake up," said mamma; "he always does, you know."

"Oon't 'ake up," said Bobboker. "San't 'ake up; don't 'awn't to 'ake up."

"Sh—h—h, beeboy," said Mamma; "it is very naughty to say that."

"Tisn't naughty," screamed Bobboker; "an' I 'ont 'ake up a bittie for oo naughty o' mamma. Ya—ya—ngya!"

"Bobboker listen!" said mamma, rising on her elbow and shaking a forefinger impressively; "if you don't go to sleep you shan't have any songs or anything else when you wake up; but you shall have a sound spanking right away."

Bobboker looked at mamma in amazement, to see if she really meant what she said; when he satisfied himself that she did, he turned over, buried his face in his pillow, and then broke into a wail that was clearly the expression of an unloved and broken heart. As for mamma, she sprang to her feet, and exclaimed.

"Now you may cry as much as you want to; mamma will go away."

"No!" shrieked Bobboker, turning over and stretching forth his arms appealingly; "musn't go away from Bobboker."

The attitude, the face, and the tone were pathetic in the extreme, but mamma had seen all of them before;

and she hardened her heart against them, and started to leave the room, when she heard ;

“ Bobboker fee’s bad ; Bobboker got saw om.”

This was harrowing to the maternal heart ; still, mamma had on many previous occasions heard of that same arm, and the plea was generally offered in extenuation of some exasperating unreasonableness. So mamma passed through the door, when her ear was greeted by a dreadful shriek :

“ Tum back aden—ya—ya—ngya ! If 'oo don’t tum back, aden, Bobboker 'll pank 'oo. Tum back to Bobboker ! If 'oo don’t tum back, Bobboker 'll go back to God !”

Mamma clapped both fingers to her ears, but turned and took down one hand to open the door. At the same instant Bridget opened the other door, and displayed a very red face and The Jefful, and asked :

“ Av ye plase, mem, how am I to do me wurruk wid this little dhivil——”

“ Bridget !” exclaimed Mrs. Mayburn.

“ Oh—h—h, she’s an angel just sint down, so she is,” said Bridget, apologizing to the baby ; “ but she’s sint at the wrong toime an’ place whin she strikes the kitchen just afther dinner, so she is. Av I lave her on the floor

she scrames ; an' av I put her on the table she throws off the dishes."

"I thought you loved her," exclaimed mamma with a dignified sense of injury expressed in every tone. "Give her to me."

"I hope ye don't fale hurt, mem," said Bridget, kindly, clinging to the baby, as mamma attempted to take her darling ; "but how am I to do me dishes an' the baby's ironin' an' things, whin I can't have me hands an' head to mesilf a minute ?"

"Give her to me," insisted mamma ; "she needs some one who can manage her."

Bridget relinquished The Jefful, and retired as meekly as if she had done something wicked, while mamma, noticing with sinking heart that a full hour of the afternoon had departed, went back to Bobboker, whose shrieks had been simply dreadful ever since his mamma had left him.

"There, there, there," said mamma, soothingly, as she appeared again before Bobboker ; "see what mamma has brought her beeboy. She's brought the dear little sister Jefful for him to play with. Bobboker must be very careful, though, or mamma will take her away again."

The movement was bold, skilful, and had every fea-

ture of a well-planned surprise; but one essential to a successful surprise is to find the enemy napping, either physically or mentally. Now Bobboker was not napping in any way; his senses were all alert; and he regarded The Jefful as critically as if he had suffered by a thousand shams, and was not ^{des}ired to add to his collection of disappointments. But when The Jefful saw him, she put out her pudgy hand, exclaimed, "Bob—bob—bob—bob—bob!" and tried to spring from her mamma's arms; and there was such hearty genuineness about all of this, that Bobboker's suspicions were dissipated, and he said:

"Tum on."

So mamma dragged Bobboker to the front of the bed and placed The Jefful where her brother had been, and made sure that the bed was pushed tightly against the wall, so that her baby could not fall to the floor, and Bobboker kissed his sister, and The Jefful fastened both hands in Bobboker's hair, and said, "goo, goo, ahgoo!" in the most ecstatic manner; and Bobboker said, "ah," and "ee," and "oo," and several other things, and mamma literally flew to her work-basket, and began to work upon the small, buttonless shirts, and the little stockings, which, though numerous, were outnumbered by the holes they contained.

How mamma's darning-needle flew ! It was not merely because the work had to be done, and she had time in which to do it—oh, no—perish the thought of such a grovelling incentive. But there, within hearing distance, was going on a merry conversation between brother and sister, and every tone of either participant was affectionate, and laughter alternated with ecstatic crowing, and love seemed to have achieved the bliss it invariably promises, but so seldom realizes, and both children were mamma's own—her very own—and she was so proud of them, and so happy in them, and in spite of work and care and consuming thought, the gates of heaven seemed just within hearing, though out of sight ; and the darlings had a papa who was the best man in the world, and a brother and sister who were unequalled in any family of which mamma knew ; and mamma herself did not see how she had ever been able to endure life when merely a girl, with nothing but dress and parties and compliments to fill her shallow mind ; and she determined that she would not have time to turn backward ten years for all the money in the world, and she wished that Will, her husband, might accidentally drop in just then and see that she was not always tired and absent-minded. Then another crow, more enthusiastic than usual, escaped The

Jefful, and all sorts of noises were combined by Bobboker as an antiphone ; and mamma herself burst into an exultant strain from the song about "Mrs. Lofty," when she heard a pronounced bump, hard yet hollow, then a long-drawn howl, and a low, but emphatic :

" Goodnish ! "

Mamma dropped her work and hurried to the rescue. She found The Jefful with her head against the wall, her eyes tightly closed, her face contracted into the ugliest of lines, her mouth wide open, and a new yell just starting from her lips.

" Oh, goodness !" exclaimed mamma, as she dragged her baby to the front and took her tightly to her breast and kissed her.

" Jefful a bad dile," said Bobboker, sternly ; " she wouldn't mind Bobboker, so Bobboker punissed her."

" Then mamma will punish *you*," was the angry response.

" No—o—o—O !" was the response. " Bobboker got a saw om."

" Is that any reason why you should give poor little Jefful a sore head ? " asked mamma, sharply.

Bobboker reflected a moment, burst out crying, and whined :

" Idono,"

"Then why did you do it?"

"Idono."

"What did you do to her?"

"Idono."

"What did she do to you?"

"Idono."

Mamma stamped her foot angrily and asked :

"Then why did you punish her?"

And Bobboker first looking all over the room and at his finger-nails for a reply answered :

"Idono."

Mamma departed abruptly, taking The Jefful with her ; and when the infantile tears were wiped away, and a smile or two had set the little face to rights, mamma put her baby upon the floor with a spool, an empty vinaigrette, and a red stocking to amuse her, and returned to the still unfinished stocking. The Jefful attacked the stocking with her teeth, lecturing it severely as she did so, but seeming to enjoy the operation, while Bobboker wailed in the next room in a long-drawn way that promised to consume the afternoon. But mamma did not care ; he might cry, and realize how naughty a thing it was to hurt his poor little helpless baby sister ; so mamma worked away, and let him cry, while she enjoyed to the

full every expression and act of the baby. The Jeffful finally wearied of her playthings, and began to settle herself jerkily, and curve her back more and more, as sitting babies generally do when tired; but mamma, like most other mammas, had never in her life imagined that a baby's back could ever become tired. So baby went on jerking and protesting; and then mamma's elbow was twitched, and, looking to see who did it she saw Bobboker, with a very solemn face and heard him remark:

“ ’Oo boosed Bobboker.”

What mamma might have said we do not know, for just then in burst Fred and Bertha, school having been dismissed.

“ Mamma, may I go to the park ? ” asked Fred.

“ Oh, say, mamma, may I put on my nice clothes and go visit Ellie Millston ? ” asked Bertha.

“ I want an appoo—a nice peeled one,” remarked Bobboker. Bobboker seemed to have some doubt as to whether he had been heard, he again asked for the appo, and repeated his request several times.

“ Ow—ya—boo—goo ! ” declared The Jeffful.

Now mamma might have answered each of the children, but one cannot very well answer four questions at a time, nor even hear them without trouble. Mamma did

the best she could ; she tried to imagine what her children had said ; then she had them repeat it, and this is what she heard :

"Mamma, say, an appoo boo into my nice Ellie Millston," which was more than even mamma, with her faculty for translating child-talk, could understand.

"One at a time, please, darlings," said mamma.

"Bobboker was only one of him at a time, him was," said Bobboker, tugging at mamma's arm, and thus drawing her yarn so tightly that it broke.

"So was I," said Bertha. "Say, mamma, may I ?"

"Ah—boo—um—ga—boobooloo," suggested baby.

"I'm wasting time awfully, mamma," said Fred.

Mamma dropped her work into her lap, and put her hands to her head, and when she had fairly taken hold of that useful member, she seemed very unwilling to let it go ; indeed, it seemed to her for a moment or two that if she removed her hands, that instant her head too would drop into her lap, which would scarcely be the proper place for the eyes, ears, and tongue of a busy little woman. Mamma had shut her eyes, as she tried to collect her senses, but Bobboker, who had been standing in front of her, roused her by exclaiming :

"Mamma, 'top a lookin' at me wif the outsides of you eyeses ; they don't say noffin at Bobboker."

Mamma seemed to think for a moment that saying things to Bobboker was not the sole purpose of existence, but when, a moment later, she felt one of her eyelids being raised by a little, though energetic finger, she changed her opinion, and opened that and the other eye also.

"Mustn't take nappies sittin' up in tsairs," said Bobboker gravely.

"Shall I wear my Princesse?" asked Bertha.

"I won't need overshoes in the park to-day, will I?" asked Fred; "it's a lovely day."

This brought mamma back to the world, for she knew that the streets and parkways were sloppy in the extreme.

"Certainly, you must wear your rubbers, my boy," said she, "if I let you go. I'm afraid, though, that you'll get into mischief of some sort."

"I won't, just going to see Ellie," said Bertha.

"You may go, Bertha, if you will dress yourself without troubling me at all—and you, too, Fred; but I must see each of you before you go out: I want you properly dressed." Then, as the children hurried to their room, mamma said to herself:

"Now I will have a peaceful hour or two at this dreadful pile of little garments."

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"Is you goin' to mend my appoo den?" asked Bobboker.

"Mamma hasn't any apple for you, bceboy," she answered. "When I go out again I will buy you one—an apple with bright red cheeks, like yours. Won't that be nice?"

"Dat 'll be afoo nice; but the nice 'i all go 'way if you don't get it quick."

"Wait until to-morrow, dear," pleaded mamma. "Poor mamma is *so* tired, and she has *so* many little shirts and stockings to mend. Just see this great big hole in Bobboker's stocking."

"Mus' mend gate big hole in Bobboker's tummuk, too, else Bobboker can't wear dat old tummuk no longer. An' mus' mend it right away. Poor Bobboker's tummuk!"

This was too much for mamma, perhaps because, as Bobboker spoke, he put both his chubby hands on the front of his waist, and looked as sad and appealing as if he had been without food for a week. So mamma called Fred, and gave him two pennies with which to buy an apple at once for his little brother.

"If I had four pennies more," suggested Fred, "we could all have apples. Don't you remember how healthy you told Aunt Madge that the doctor said they were?"

"Yes, dear, but I've no more pennies; I've nothing smaller than a half-dollar."

"Oh, that's jolly; think of what lots of change I'd bring back."

"I fear you'd lose some of it, little boy. You must wait until to-morrow for your apple."

"Oh, mamma! You wouldn't have me be unhealthy, would you?"

"You're in no serious danger," laughed mamma, looking at the plump, rosy cheeks and bright eyes of her boy. "Now run out."

"Nobody can ever tell about such things," said Fred, with owlish gravity. "Bertha," he continued, as his sister entered the room, "don't you think an apple would make you feel healthier?"

"I guess *two* apples would," said Bertha, looking upward as she reflected and approached, and stumbling over the baby, who was seated between two pillows on the floor. The Jefful had a very strong little back, for a baby, but it had not yet learned to be equal to surprises; so the little back went backward with baby's big head on top of it, and then something hit the floor very hard, and baby said something that sent mamma's fingers flying to her ears, although there was nothing improper about it.

Then mamma stooped quickly over the baby, and so did Bertha, after she had said "Oh!" and so did Fred; and three heads rattled against each other over the baby's, and Bertha said "Oh!" again, and Fred said "My!" and mamma said "Goodness" and The Jefful went on saying just what she had begun to say; and then mamma picked baby up, and her head met Bobboker's as she arose, and Bobboker said "Ow!" and then all the children cried together, while mamma wished she could be a baby and cry too, with some one to hold her, and no unmended shirts and stockings nearer than Van Dieman's land or Spitzbergen.

"We'll have to have apples now, mamma," said Fred, after he had cried enough, and had wiped his eyes with his gloved fingers until his face looked like a map with a great many boundary-lines and rivers laid out on it.

Mamma seemed to think so too, for she opened her portemonnaie, handed Fred a half-dollar, and told him to go quickly and take his sister with him. Then she cuddled baby tighter, and kissed the back of her fuzzy head; and baby put up a pudgy little hand in a sort of aimless way, yet managed to grasp three or four hairs that floated low on mamma's face and then mamma said "Oh, baby!"

and tried to unclasp the tiny fist, while Bobboker stopped crying and laughed :

“ Ha, ha, ha !—fot a funny face you’s a-makin’ ! Ah, you’s stopped a-makin’ it ! ” For mamma had got her stray hairs back again.

“ Bobboker mustn’t laugh when mamma was being hurt,” said mamma, “ because it makes her feel bad.”

“ Mus’ feel good when’s havin’ funny hurts to make Bobboker go laugh. *Mus’ have’ 'em, I say.* Is you got 'em, I say. Is you got’em ? If you isn’t, Bobboker fee’s bad, an’ he mus’ k’y wight away.”

“ Yes—yes—oh, yes—I have them ; I’ll have everything, little boy, if it will keep you from crying.”

But Bobboker had already got his eyes screwed up, and his lower lips rolled down, and he did not know exactly how to roll up and unscrew again, so he began to whimper in a doleful, draggy way, that sounded as if he was taking his cry so leisurely that he would never finish it.

“ Bobboker, dear,” said mamma, hastily laying baby in the corner of the lounge, and picking up her small boy, “ mamma has a bad headache, and Bobboker’s cry makes it hurt worse and worse—oh, so bad.”

“ Den lomme bit.” squealed Bobboker ; “ that’ll make

the hurt go 'way. An' tell me story about good 'ittie boy named Bobboker, how he was always hweet to his mamma. Be quick ; I feel the k'y all comin' out again."

Mamma hugged her boy, and patted his cheek, and at the same instant began ; "Once there was a little boy——" when open flew the door behind her, striking the wall with a loud bang, and she heard Fred's voice saying :

"Mamma, can't we buy a new slate-pencil apiece while we're out ?"

"Yes, dear," said mamma very sweetly. But Fred did not see the look that came over her face.

"And a stick of candy too ?" asked Bertha.

"No," said mamma, very shortly.

"Now, mamma," said Fred, "it's only two more pen- nies, you know."

"Candy is not good for little children, my boy," said mamma. "You know papa and I have told you so a hundred times."

"Well I——" said Fred.

"I——" said Bertha at the same time.

"That will do," said mamma, so sharply that baby started violently, took her finger out of her mouth, and stared at mamma's face ; there she saw something that

caused her to burst into a howl, which was so high and long that it seemed as if it never could have come from so small a thing as a baby's throat. Mamma sprang from her chair, set Bobboker on the floor, pushed Fred and Bertha out of the room, and shut the door as if it was a very hard one to manage. Then she picked up The Jef-ful, dropped back into the rocking-chair, and cried a great deal harder than baby did, though she made no noise about it.

"It's wainin' on you' face, mamma," observed Bobboker, after a moment; "shall Bobboker get mamma um-bayella?"

Then mamma stopped crying and laughed, and managed to drag the little fellow up into her lap with baby, and shut her eyes, and rocked with both of them; but when she opened her eyes by accident, and saw the pile of shirts and stockings again she groaned, and stopped rocking.

"Bobboker," said she, "don't you want to build a great high block house for baby?—one of the big funny houses that nobody but Bobboker can make?"

"Ess," said Bobboker, after a moment of deliberation, "Get me the blockses."

"You get them, dear," said mamma. "Run up to the play room, and bring them down in your apron."

Bobboker started, and mamma tucked baby away in the corner of the lounge, and drew her chair and work-basket near, so as to be ready to save The Jefful in case she should tumble forward. She picked up her work, and had just taken her needle in her hand, when a little voice said :

" You mus' opin de doocr for me."

" Oh, mamma's big boy can open the door—just hold the knob tight, and turn it."

" Me do," said Bobboker, " but the knob don't hold Bobboker hand a bittie pittie."

" Try again, like a great big man," said mamma, kindly.

The knob rattled ; some grunts, and puffs, and quick breathings were heard ; then a patterning of little feet was heard, and mamma saw a serious little face and two big eyes in front of her, and heard :

" Me tried aden but door-knob didn't try any much at all. An' door-knob'll k'y if mamma don't open it."

" Then it may cry," said mamma, and took such a vigorous stitch that she stuck the needle quite a way into her finger before she fully understood what she was doing. Then she took the needle out very slowly, and put her finger into her mouth quite quickly.

"Why, mamma," said Bobboker, "don't you know it isn't nice to put fingers in moufs? You'll never grow up to be a man if you do dat. An' the door is stayin' shut all dis time."

Mamma snatched baby, hurried to the door, and opened it, and said:

"Go!"

"Fare is me to go to?" asked Bobboker, looking very much surprised.

"Go upstairs and get the blocks."

"Fot blockses?"

"The blocks to make a house for baby."

"Fare is dey?"

"Up in the play-room."

"Oh!" said Bobboker, and mamma said exactly the same thing as she returned to her chair.

"Peace for two—three—perhaps five minutes," murmured mamma, as she picked up her work again. "But how I am beginning to hate work." Peace did endure for two minutes, but not quite three, for suddenly the door-bell rang violently, and mamma remembered that her servant had gone to the grocer's.

"Oh, oh! I hope it's no one to call," said mamma putting baby hurriedly upon the floor. Then she changed

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her dress almost in a moment, gave her hair a few quick touches before the mirror, hurried to the door, and let in—Fred and Bertha.

"We got a—why, mamma, what is the matter?" said Fred.

"Nothing, my boy," replied mamma.

Fred seemed for a moment to doubt his mamma's statement, but at last he started for the sitting-room, remarking as he went:

"I think that nothing must be one of the dreadfulest things in the world."

Mamma followed her children, and as they seated themselves, said:

"Now, children, you must get a plate over which to peel your apples, and—"

Fred looked at Bertha, and Bertha looked at Fred, and then both looked very blank, and Fred said:

"I declare! If we didn't forget to get those apples after all!"

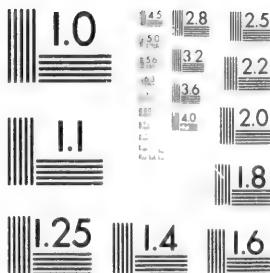
"What did you go out for?" asked mamma severely.

"Why, for apples," said Fred.

"And candy," interrupted Bertha.

"And slate-pencils," continued Fred; "and the slate-pencil place was nearest, so we got them first, and then

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we got the candy because the candy-store came next, and then--let me see, what *did* we do then, Bertha?—oh, yes, we saw an organ-grinder, and we thought maybe he was one of the ones that play before our house sometimes, so we followed him up this way to see if he was, and here we are."

"I think here you had better stay, too," said mamma, "until you learn to remember what you go out for, particularly when it is for something that you yourselves want. Don't you think that would be a good way of learning?"

Fred didn't seem to think anything of the sort; while Bertha, who had determined just what to wear on her visit to Ellie, and just what to talk about when she reached the home of that young lady, disapproved of any discipline whatever on that particular afternoon. But both children saw something in mamma's face that made them think it advisable to be quiet for a few moments, so Bertha opened mouth and eyes as if she would take in the whole of that particular figure of the carpet at which she was staring, while Fred rolled his lips apart and moved his eyelids together until he seemed to be nothing but a great big pout. As for mamma, she darned away industriously, completing one stocking and then another

until it occurred to her that the room was very quiet. The connection between calms and storms had been so often demonstrated in the Mayburn family that mamma looked around suspiciously, and saw Fred and Bertha making diabolical faces at each other, while The Jefful gazed upon them with a frightened fascination that rendered her utterly dumb.

"Children!" exclaimed mamma severely.

Fred and Bertha looked idiotically innocent in an instant, while The Jefful, the spell being broken, emitted a loud wail.

"Are'n't you ashamed of yourselves, children? What were you making those dreadful faces for?"

"Well, Fred did," said Bertha.

"Well, Bertha did," said Fred.

"Say, mamma," said Fred, "I don't think you enjoy us much to-day."

"Neither do I," said Bertha.

"I really believe," answered mamma, after a quiet moment or two, "that I agree with both of you."

"Well, I know how you can get rid of both of us," said Fred. "Just let us have a tea-party."

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Bertha. "Um!" For Bertha, although Fred's twin sister, had a tooth sweeter by far than could be found in her brother's mouth.

"You may have it," said mamma.

"Oh—h—h," exclaimed Fred, as he kissed his mamma soundly; "aren't you good to-day?"

Mamma accepted the compliment with the modesty peculiar to true merit.

"How many kinds of cake can we have, mamma?" asked Bertha.

"Only one," said mamma. "You may have sandwiches, lemonade, cake, and fruit, and you can have nothing whatever if you bother me at all about it. I will give Bridget orders to get everything ready, and you will have nothing to do but sit down and enjoy your party."

"Mamma," said Bertha, "I want to know just one thing: may I invite Ella?"

"Yes," said mamma. "Invite whomever you please."

"Hoo—ee!" exclaimed Fred. "Where's my overcoat? I'm going out to invite Jimmy, and Frank, and Stringey, and Whopps, and—"

"Stop—stop!" exclaimed mamma, "of whom are you talking?"

"Why, some nice boys I play with in the park," exclaimed Fred.

"Who are they? Where do they live?" asked mamma.

"Frank lives in the avenue, Jim lives over the candy-

shop around the corner, and Stringey and Whopps both live in the same house ; and oh—it's just the loveliest house in New York."

"The loveliest ?"

"Yes ; it's so nice and quiet ; it's got another house in front of it that shuts out all the noise. And my, aren't his folks rich ? There's more nice white clothes always lying around their rooms than I ever saw in *our* house."

Mamma grew envious at once, for superabundant linen was a luxury to which the Mayburn family had never attained, work as hard as she might. So she began to question curiously.

"Is it very nice linen ? But of course you don't know."

"Oh yes, I do," said Fred, "and it's awfully nice. And it's always clean. And oh, you ought to see what fun I have when I go there."

Mamma felt uncomfortable. She did not like her children to go to any one's house—even that of their playmates—unless she knew that their appearance was creditable to the family ; and Fred had been to the residence of these boys without permission when, probably, his attire was disarranged and his face and hands dirty.

"And such fun, mamma, as we have there you can't begin to think of. Right under their window there's a

rope that goes around a wheel, and the other end of it goes around a wheel at another house, and we pull it back and forth."

Mamma was mystified; what people could want of ropes in such a place she could not imagine; perhaps it was a private telephone between two neighbors, and Fred had been disarranging it. She would investigate.

"Doesn't their mamma object when you play with the rope?" she asked.

"No," said Fred; "only when it's got clothes on it."

Clothes? Was this rope a device for airing clothing and furs? What intelligent care!

"What kind of clothes are on the rope?" asked mamma.

"Oh, shirts, and stockings, and things—just millions of 'em," said Fred; "Stringey's mamma sometimes makes as much as twelve dollars a week washing clothes, and the days she washes just don't we have fun blowing soap-bubbles in the tubs after the water gets too dirty to wash any more things in? Whopps goes and hooks his papa's pipes, and ——"

"Sh!" exclaimed mamma, as the truth flashed into her mind that her son had been the guest of a washerwoman's family. Fred looked astonished, but determined that he must have been mistaken; so he continued:

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" Whopps can always get pipes when his papa is tight, and —."

" Be quiet, I say," exclaimed mamma. " Ca—a—a—a!"

" Well, they're better bubbles than we ever make at home, any way," said Fred. " Whopps's mamma says it's because the suds have more body."

" Fred!" exclaimed mamma springing from her chair and seizing her boy's arm, " if you say another word, I'll send you to bed without supper, tea-party, or anything."

Fred looked honestly into his mother's eyes for an explanation, but failed to get it; so he dropped sullenly upon the sofa, and looked daggers at his shoe-toes. As for mamma, she went through every by-path and puddle in the valley of humiliation. She understood it all now. She had seen the interiors of certain city squares as she had passed up and down town over the elevated roads; her husband had told her of the little squalid tenement-houses built in the rear of larger ones; she had seen the lines full of clothes hung out to dry, and her boy had become familiar with such neighborhoods and their occupants! Mamma had given many packages of clothing to charitable societies to distribute in such places, but now she wished that—well, she breathed a small prayer that she might be kept from hating the people who, according

to the Bible and the Declaration of Independence, were just as good as herself. Then followed some moments of most painful silence ; then mamma said :

“ My boy, you cannot invite Stringey and Whopps to the tea-party ; and you must not play with them any more.”

“ I don’t care,” said Fred ; “ I think that’s real mean, anyway.”

“ You must allow mamma to be the judge of that.”

“ Then whom can I invite ? ”

“ Any one about whom I know everything. Invite some nice children.”

“ Well,” said Fred, after pondering for a moment, “ may I go ask Adolphe ? ”

“ Where does he live ? ” asked mamma. “ In a nice quiet house with ropes on wheels under the windows ? ”

“ No,” said Fred ; “ he lives just around the corner from the avenue—on the same block with Mrs. Millson, you know.”

This seemed to mamma to insure at least outward respectability to Adolphe, and, as the conversation distracted attention from the little stockings, mamma consented, and instructed the children to hurry and deliver their invitations personally while Bridget prepared the refreshments,

otherwise supper-time would arrive before the dining-room could be cleared.

"Bobboker 'awnts to tevite somebody," fell upon mamma's ears while Fred and Bertha hurried away.

"You invite The Jefful, beeboy," said mamma, as she called Bridget, and gave directions for the feast. Then she succeeded in disposing of several little stockings before Fred and Bertha returned and the collation was served. The children begged her to come down and see how lovely everything looked, and she thought at first that she would do so, but the passion for working had grown by what it fed upon, so she remained in her chair, and instructed the older children to place Bobboker at the table, and be sure that all his wants were gratified. As for The Jefful, she seemed to know that her mother was busy, for she just curled up in a Turkish chair in the happiest way in the world, and made lovely noises, without manifesting the slightest inclination to tumble from the chair to the floor. As for mamma, she was none the less happy, because through open doors she heard childish voices in animated, but not quarrelsome conversation. She recognised them all; there were the emphatic tones of her glorious Fred, the numberless inflections with which Bertha always rendered whatever she had to say, even if

it was only a request for a pin ; she heard the ladylike monotone of Bertha's friend, Ellie ; the irregular, but delicious jabber of Bobboker ; and another voice, so rich, full, and melodious, that she was fully satisfied that Fred's Adolphe, was a child of fine birth and training. She dropped into a delightful reverie about the friendships and prospects of her children, but not a moment did her needle rest as she dreamed. Suddenly she heard Fred exclaiming: "I'll ask mamma," and a moment later the boy himself appeared, and asked :

" Mamma, can't we have sliced oranges with powdered sugar ? "

" Oh, Fred," said mamma, " I can't call Bridget away from her work again ; do eat your oranges as they are."

" Well, I don't like to give them to company in that way, to muss their fingers all up, and their nice clothes too."

" Your company will have to be careful, my boy," said mamma. " I can't call Bridget from her work, nor drop my own either."

" Then let Bertha and me slice them ; we can do it as well as any one."

" Very well ; you may," said mamma. " Be careful not to cut your fingers."

"All right," said Fred, as he flew out of the door, and encountered with a forcible bang his twin sister, who was just entering. The children carefully imitated each other in most things; but the discord that arose when they cried in unison showed that they still had something to learn. As they screamed, mamma hurried to their assistance, to find Fred with a bleeding nose, and Bertha with a cut lip, which also was bleeding.

"Bertha's a—boo—hoo—a hateful old thing, to run bang into me that way," said Fred, taking his hand from his wounded nose to wipe his eyes, and smearing his face as he did so until he was a little more hideous than a Piute chief with all his war-paint on.

"You're a hateful old thing yourself," cried Bertha, her own visage bathed in tears. "You—"

"Be quiet, children," commanded mamma. "It was an accident; no one is to blame, unless you, Bertha, did wrong to come up-stairs. Why did you leave the table?"

"Well, mamma," said Bertha, "if we're going to have fruit, I think we ought to have fruit napkins too."

"You must not be particular, my child," said mamma. "You are not having a regular dinner; it is only a sort of lunch, you know."

" Well, we're making believe it's a big dinner, any how ; the first sandwich apiece we made believe was soup, and the next was fish, and——"

" Never mind, dear," said mamma ; " do your best with what you have, and make believe the napkins are fruit-napkins."

" We can't, unless they're colored," said Bertha, " and ——" The remainder of her sentence was extinguished by the wet towel which mamma passed over her mouth as she washed the tears from her daughter's face. Then Fred, who had been operating upon his own face at the basin, displayed a spot of blood on his collar, and was ordered to redress his neck, which change he made only after considerable grumbling, while mamma resumed her work. In about ten minutes Fred descended, and a second later a loud remonstrance in his voice was wafted upward, followed by this pointed conversation :

" You'd no business to do it."

" I had."

" You hadn't."

" I had, too."

" You hadn't, either."

" You're a mean, ugly, hateful thing."

All this came up stairs before mamma could reach the hall, and call down in her most authoritative tones :

"Children, stop quarrelling this instant. What will your little friends think?"

"Well, mamma," said Fred, running out into the hall and looking up, "Bertha has been and sliced all the oranges—my half of them and all."

"What do you want me to do about it, my boy—put them together again?"

Fred dropped his head and muttered: "No."

"Then run back and make yourself agreeable to your company."

Fred returned to his seat and mamma to hers. There was but one more little stocking now, and, although mamma had left this until the last, because it was the very, very worst, she felt that victory was as good as achieved, and her heart exulted as it had not done since a fortnight before, when she finished one of Bertha's dresses on which work had dragged in a most discouraging manner. But the end was not yet, for again Fred's voice came up the stairs:

"Mamma, where's the powdered sugar?"

"In the bowl."

"Well, the bowl's empty."

"Then go down to Bridget and ask her to fill it."

"She isn't there. I did go down."

" You can use ordinary sugar then. You won't know the difference."

" Why, mamma," whispered Fred, though loud enough to be heard by his visitors, had they been out of doors ; " do you think that's a nice way to treat company ? "

Mamma dropped the stocking, and went down ; she found Fred hugging the sugar-bowl, and led him to the kitchen floor, filled the bowl, and hurried back to her work, to find that The Jefful had imagined herself deserted and was wailing pitifully. Mamma had the distressed baby on her breast in an instant, and said :

" Did ze hateful o' mamma wun away f'om her poo' ittie andzel Jefful ? Was a awfoo' unkind mamma, an' ought to be tsopped up into a fousand pieces—so s'e ought."

Nobody knows how these well-selected words comforted The Jefful ; the little thing stopped crying at once, and looked so happy that mamma kissed her again and again, and conversed with her so satisfactorily that no one knows when she would have stopped had not Bertha appeared.

" Bertha ! " exclaimed mamma ; " go down again this instant."

Bertha burst into tears.

"Oh, well," sighed mamma ; "what is it ?"

"Why you see mamma, there were six pieces of cake, and, after each of us took a piece, there was one left, and Fred wants to cut it in two and give half to Adolphe and half to Ellie ; but I think it ought to be cut into five pieces, or else you can give us four more pieces. Anyhow, all of us ought to have a share."

"Cut it in five—no, do as Fred suggested. You should be ashamed of yourself to quarrel about such a little thing. No, stop ; bring it up here, and let Jefful have a share in the tea-party."

Then Bertha's tears burst forth in floods, and her emotions were so uncontrollable that she sobbed aloud, as she started slowly down. Mamma sprang from her chair seized Bertha's shoulder, led her back, and closed the door.

"Now, my daughter," said she, "if you don't stop crying this instant you shall go to bed at once, and stay there until morning."

Bertha stifled her sobs, kneaded her cheeks and eyes industriously with her knuckles, and at last became sufficiently composed to say :

"It was *our* cake, and I think we ought to share it around."

"Bertha!" exclaimed mamma, stamping impatiently, "one would suppose that you had never seen or tasted cake before. How dare you be so greedy and silly?"

Bertha's tears started again, for she was a tender hearted little girl, and very sensitive to blame or praise.

"Stop crying!" said mamma, "or go to bed. Make up your mind this instant which of the two you prefer to do."

Bertha made a desperate effort; she staunched her tears, swallowed her sobs, wiped her face with a towel, and went below looking like a very bad case of erysipelas to which the sufferer is compulsorily resigned. Mamma's complexion was somewhat erysipeletic, too, as she picked up that dreadful last stocking once more, and it took several moments of vigorous tugs and plaintive pleadings by The Jefful to bring mamma back to the semblance of tranquillity. Finally, however, the stocking, which had steadily grown hateful during the last quarter hour, was finished, and mamma's exultation was resumed as she placed it with its mate, and assorted the others into pairs, and put them into the proper drawers, after first proudly contemplating the entire heap.

Then she thought it would be pleasant to take The Jefful, descend to the dining-room, and give the chil-

dren a final treat in the shape of some figs and nuts. So down she went, and just in time, for the company had already arisen, and were in a glorious heap on the floor in some sort of play that only children understand and appreciate. Mamma, for once, could not see anything amusing about it, and she proceeded to disentangle the children, her energy being stimulated by the cries which proceeded from Adolphe, who was not only at the bottom of the heap, but whose face was dark enough to suggest imminent danger of strangulation. At last the heap was resolved into its component parts, and Adolphe scrambled to his feet ; but even then his face did not assume a particularly brilliant complexion, and as mamma noted his hair, which was a mass of jet black kinks of extreme tightness, she determined that he might not have been in danger of strangulation after all, for Adolphe's ancestors had evidently emigrated, probably under compulsion, from Africa's sunny climes, and had preserved in all its intensity the original family complexion.

Within a few hours mamma was thoroughly ashamed of herself for the heart-sinking and subsequent indignation which followed this discovery. In these cooler moments she saw clearly that Adolphe's extraction had not prevented his being a boy of exquisite manners, a car-

riage more graceful than that of either of her own children, an innocent, honest, child face, and a voice that was music itself. But, within a moment of her first view of Adolphe, she had the elbow of Fred's jacket tight between her thumb and forefinger, and was moving into the front parlor with a tread so determined that Fred was terrified even out of asking what was the occasion of the demonstration. The sliding-doors were closed with a crash. Fred was quickly twitched into a chair in some way that he did not exactly understand, and then he saw before him his mamma with eyes ablaze and uplifted finger, and heard her say :

“ How could you do it ? ”

“ Do what ? ” asked Fred, hurrying through his mind to recall the latest dreadful act of his own that had not yet been discovered, and that he had not collected courage to confess.

“ Do what ? ” echoed mamma so loudly and sharply that Fred shivered uncontrollably. Then mamma paced to and fro with her hands behind her back and Fred confided to Bertha at bedtime that mamma looked just terrible while she was doing it. Then mamma repeated, “ Do what ? ” before Fred had recovered from the first shock ; and, as she continued her walk, she imagined just

how Ellie, who came of a tell-tale family, would tell her mamma that the Mayburn children invited little darkies to their house, and Ella's mamma would tell every one she knew, making special tours of calls for the purpose, and everything would be dreadful. Mamma knew one thing very distinctly ; she could never hold up her head among her own friends, and she was just going to tell her husband that she should go househunting at once in Brooklyn, or Jersey City, or some other suburban town where she was not known.

As for Fred, he began to gain courage, partly from mamma's silence, and partly because he could not for the life of him recall any particularly wicked act of his own ; so he began also to feel aggrieved, and he asked :

“ What's it all about, mamma, anyhow ? ”

“ What is it about ? ” was the reply, as mamma stopped short and fiercely faced him. “ It's about that boy—that—that— ” Mamma had herself enough in control to remember that she came of a family of abolitionists, so she concluded with “ that Adolphe.”

“ I don't see anything the matter with him,” said Fred.
“ What do *you* see ? ”

“ His color,” said mamma, shortly.

“ Why, you always said you doted on dark complex-

ions." said Fred, " which I don't think is very nice of you seeing we children are all very light."

" There are different degrees of dark," said mamma, while Fred disappeared behind a great pout, and muttered that he wished there was any way for boys to find out how to please their mammas.

" You said he lived just around the corner from the avenue," resumed mamma, ceasing for a moment her restless walk.

" So he does," asserted Fred, " and over the handsomest stable I know of. And *don't* his papa drive a splendid pair of black horses, and sit on a very high seat to do it ? —oh, my !"

Mamma's tramp recommenced, and with a step considerably quicker than before. A short period of silence was broken by Fred asking timidly :

" Don't you think his hair curls perfectly lovely ? "

" No, I don't !" mamma answered with extraordinary decision. Then she stopped, drew a chair to Fred's side, and said :

" My dear little boy, I can't say that you have done anything wrong, but you have made a great blunder. You mustn't bring Adolphe here any more ; I am very sorry you brought him this afternoon."

" Why ? " asked Fred.

" You can't understand now," said mamma, " but you must trust me and obey me. I wonder if—but no." Mamma had thought to ask him to ask Ellie to consider the tea-party a great secret, about which nothing was to be said by any one ; but remembering how leaky are the receptacles of children's secrets, she refrained, and determined to make an early call upon Ellie's mother and many other ladies, and take the sting out of the story by telling all, as a laughable illustration of childish ignorance. This inspiration so comforted her that she kissed Fred, and returned to the dining-room with him to bid the guests good-bye. Adolphe had really a very attractive face, so mamma relented as soon as she saw him ; she even put oranges into his pockets for the two sisters she learned he had at home. Then, seeing it was after five o'clock she managed to dismiss the visitors without seeming to send them away, and the spectacle of Adolphe escorting Ellie home so delighted her that she wished she could follow them and see how acquaintances of Ellie's family would regard the two as they met them on the street.

As she stood smiling in the doorway, however, glancing after the couple, she heard a sound which reminded her that she had left The Jefful sitting upon the dining-room

floor, so she hurried back to her baby to find that enterprising infant badly mixed up with a high chair which she had toppled over. To console The Jefful was not a hard task, and then mamma flew upstairs with the young lady, undressed her, fed her, and, in spite of a thousand maternal promptings, which made her hate Freindhoff more than ever, she put the baby to bed and dressed to receive her husband's guest. When in the midst of the mysteries and miseries of her toilet, she remembered with horror that the beer and Limburger cheese, which her husband had requested, had not yet been purchased ; so Bridget was summoned—to her own disgust—from her preparations for supper, and was begged to hurry out and purchase the detested delicacies. Bridget, in turn, impressed Fred into the household service ; and his memory failed him so badly that he brought back Brie instead of Limburger, because all that he could remember of his instructions was that the cheese he was to buy was “the dhivil's own, an' smelt that bad that no chaze in the wurruld cud hold a candle to it.” So Fred, forgetting the name, had asked for whatever cheese smelled worse than any other.

EVENING.

BUT while Bridget was trembling for the result, mamma was in blissful ignorance of the affair; she assumed the cross of love by putting on her prettiest dress, and when finally she heard the front door slam, and a manly voice below shouting, "Home again, pet!" she went promptly down stairs with as angelic a martyr's mind as ever approached a faggot-piled stake. She entered the parlor with a smile that her best friend would have considered sufficient, yet she had assumed it for the man who was to rob her for a whole evening of her husband. But she did not behold in the large reception-chair, where her husband always placed them, the goggle-glasses, the shabby clothing, and awkward figure of Freindhoff; and, looking further for them, she found her husband under a drop lamp, in the back parlor, looking very forlorn.

"He couldn't come," said Mr. Mayburn, as his wife interrogated him with her eyes; "he was called by telegraph to a professional job in Philadelphia."

"You poor, disappointed fellow!" exclaimed Mrs. Mayburn, dropping into her husband's lap, and putting her

arms about his neck. She really sorrowed for her husband in his disappointment, mamma did ; but if her lord and master had seen the face which hung over his shoulder, he would have doubted forever woman's capacity for sympathy. Mamma broke into such a happy bewilderment of smiles that it seemed impossible to hide the truth even by hiding the countenance. Her husband tried to press her head backward so as to kiss her, but she was compelled, for consistency's sake, to resist. Her heart beat so violently, that it seemed her husband must certainly hear it, and suspect its sincerity ; so she made a violent effort to control it, but with no effect. The room seemed warmer, lighter, prettier than it had ever been before, and mamma could hardly refrain from springing to her feet and shouting for joy. But she would be true to her husband, whatever might be her feelings ; so she somehow exchanged smiles for solemnity, and kissed her husband's sober face several times, and was so affectionate and sympathetic, that the object of her attentions looked at her intently, and said, with deep feeling :

“ You do love me, pet, don't you ? ”

“ Why, Will ! ” exclaimed mamma, almost crying as she said it. But she recovered herself, and called him a silly fellow, and then the supper-bell rang ; and as the couple

arose, mamma clasped her husband's waist, hummed a polka, and whirled him around the room, first to his amazement, but speedily to his great delight.

"What is the matter with you to-night, little girl?" asked papa, when finally disengaged, and on the way to the supper-table.

"Nothing," said mamma, valiantly swallowing the truth. "Only I want you to forget your disappointment, and it always makes me happy to try to console you when you are in trouble."

"You are an angel, Florence," said papa. By this time he had unconsciously given his arm to his wife, and was escorting her in the most courteous manner to her chair at the head of the table, seating her at last with a bow, which mamma had missed for several years. Only one of the children was in the dining-room, but mamma did not miss the others; and even papa failed to note that there were fewer plates to fill than usual. And this was not all; conversation turned upon topics other than the family bills, the broken furniture, and the children's ever-to-be-renewed clothing. Papa found himself telling something that he had heard that day from a jolly acquaintance, and, although it did not seem to mamma to be particularly funny, the sight of her husband almost un-

controllable with merriment was of itself enough to make her laugh long and heartily. Then papa remembered another good story he had heard, and mamma laughed with him over that, too, for it really was very funny ; and at last papa was so impressed by his wife's merry face, that he dropped his knife and exclaimed, with looks and tones that were full of tenderness :

" I do believe I've got my little wife back again—my wife of years ago."

Mamma's hilarity ceased at once ; and what first came in the place of it was almost like anger. This she quickly banished ; but she was not so successful with something that threatened to break her voice as she replied :

" You have never lost her, Will ; she has always been here—if her husband of several years ago had looked for her."

Papa looked astonished, and then aggrieved. Had he not been looking for her all these years ? Had he not always longed to see her smiling and light-hearted when he came home, and had he not almost always been disappointed ? Was she not almost always abstracted, or quiet, or nearly invisible ? Did she not seem almost to delight in doing things that took her away from him ? How often, in late years, had he been able to impress any-

thing upon her mind without mentioning it at least twice ? Time and time again, while he was telling her something in which he was greatly interested, did she not show by her looks that she was not hearing him at all, and by her actions that she was more intent upon seeing that one child kept its napkin under its chin at the table, and another was not rubbing out the knees of its stockings on the floor, and that Bridget was setting bread to rise at just the proper hour and part of the kitchen, and heaven only knows what else ? Mamma should never, never know how deeply she had hurt him ; but he could not be entirely silent after such a rebuke, so he said :

" Do you think that is a very kind speech, my dear ? I've never ceased to look for you."

" I believe you, my husband," said mamma, going around to the aggrieved man's side, " but if you wanted very much to find any one, shouldn't you think it would be well to go where they were ? "

Papa looked at her in astonishment, and replied :

" Why, don't I always go where you are ? Where can I find you, except at home ? "

" Find me where my interests lie, dear. You are my first, my dearest ; but I have four other dear ones who are practically helpless, as you are not. I have the home

to look after, and its work can never be done. The children and home are yours as much as they are mine; why don't you come to them when you want me?"

A glimpse of something heretofore undiscovered rewarded papa's introspective gaze; but mamma broke down just then, and papa, whose love was as great as his ignorance, and as glad as any good man's is to give rather than receive, consoled his wife as tenderly as he knew how, and when at last he had dried her tears and seen a smile forced into her face, he said :

"I'll see if I can't be wiser hereafter, little girl. There, now; let's have a pleasant evening to ourselves."

Mamma had sunk to the floor, and pillow'd her head on her husband's knee, and he was smoothing the disarranged hairs on her brow; she did not seem to care ever to get up, and he did not seem to desire that she should when in burst Fred with :

"Ain't I ever to have any supper, I'd like to know?"

"You should have come in when the bell rang, sir," said papa, sternly.

"I didn't hear the bell," said Fred, promptly.

"Where were you?"

"Over in the park."

Papa did not know what to say next, so he said nothing.

Then Bertha straggled in ; she had been in the play-room on the top floor, and had heard no bell. So papa and mamma reluctantly disengaged themselves, and filled their children's plates and cups ; then papa led mamma to the parlor, and did it in the most affectionate manner and begged her to sing one of her songs which he had not heard or mentioned in years. Mamma sang it gloriously ; she astonished even herself. She sang another, and still another, all by special request, and all well, and papa began to think that there never was such a glorious evening, when suddenly he noted that mamma was becoming abstracted. He was about to kindly call her attention to it, when she exclaimed :

" Now, old fellow, I must put Bobboker and The Jefful to bed."

Papa instantly made an impatient gesture, but said tenderly :

" I wish you didn't have to go away from me."

" Would it be impossible for you to go with me ? " asked mamma with a smile.

" The idea ! " exclaimed papa. " Those young ones keep up an incessant hullabaloo from the moment you undress them until they drop asleep. What chance would there be for me to speak a word to you ? "

Mamma thought that if papa were she and she were

papa it would be delightful even to sit where he was at work, let the noise be what it might ; but she merely said as she left the room :

“ Very well.”

Papa arose from his chair, stepped irresolutely toward his wife, paused, turned, and began to pace the floor moodily.

“ ‘ Very well ! ’ ” he echoed. “ Umph ! That sounded very much as if she felt offended. But what about, I wonder ? Let me see, what were we talking about ? Oh, about my going with her to the children’s room. She couldn’t have felt hurt because I didn’t want to do that ; she knows as well as I do that there’s no such thing as speaking half a dozen words consecutively where those two children are. The baby finds something to cry about all the while she is being undressed, and Bobboker never ceases for an instant to gabble when his mother is paying attention to either of the other children. What could she have been thinking about ? I vow, women are the best beings alive, but they’re certainly the most unreasonable.”

The longer papa paced and soliloquised the more uncomfortable he became, but he finally determined that the only manly course would be to endure in silence whatever unfair treatment he received from his wife ; she was a

noble, earnest, affectionate woman, who certainly had a great deal to try her patience from day to day, and if her experiences had sometimes the effect of warping her intelligence and temper, her husband should be loving enough to endure it tenderly and without complaint. That such a duty was to be his did not, however, improve his spirits any, and he roamed restlessly about the room, seeking relief, but finding none, in books and pictures. Then he dropped upon the piano stool, and tormented the instrument into various discords, until mamma flew down the stairs and to his side again. He looked at her with an odd mixture of dolefulness and conscious heroism, and she showed a face full of contrition and humility, all of which papa accepted in affecting silence.

But mamma was not going to be miserable, no matter what had happened. An evening saved from Freindhoff was like a brand snatched from the burning, so at least it seemed to mamma ; so, when she saw, without seeming to look, that her husband's lips were twitching, as if they had something which they were trying to lock in, and which would, therefore, keep anything else from getting out, she drew a chair to her husband's side and in front of the piano, and played and sang :

“O, whistle, and I'll come to thee, my lad,”
with a dash that was simply irresistible. Papa com-

bated the influence of the song for a bar or two, but he had finally to turn his head away, for his lips were breaking down, and the wrinkles in his brow were smoothing in spite of himself. He tried to make himself believe that the influence, like the song, would last only for a moment or two ; but it was useless. He found himself upon his feet without understanding exactly how he got there ; then he was contemplating himself in the back of a tiny mirror on the music-stand, and determining that he was quite young and bright-looking for a man who had been determining to be a martyr. Then he walked—strutted almost—the length of the parlors, looking at his wife quite steadily, as he did so, and as the last strain of the chorus at the end of the song died away, his pretty wife received a hearty kiss on each cheek, and martyrdom and injured feelings were as far away as the days of Adam.

“ Italian opera would be an utter failure in New York if all wives sang at home as you can sing, my dear,” said he.

Mamma felt sure that she knew better, but she would not for the world have undeceived him if he had such ideas ; so she merely said :

“ It’s delightful to have one’s efforts appreciated. What else shall I sing you ?”

Papa dragged dusty volumes of music from the stand, while mamma extemporized a little waltz.

"Try the 'Jewel Song' from *Faust*," said papa finally, as he placed the music before her.

"My dear fellow," said mamma, deprecatingly, "I'm not Gerster, nor Kellogg, nor Nilsson."

"Mamma mus' hing 'Hus' my deeo," said a small, familiar voice. Both parents turned quickly, and saw Bobboker standing in the doorway, clad in a long white robe, a rumpled head, and an angelic expression of countenance.

"Did you ever?" exclaimed mamma. "The darling little scamp! Think of singing well enough to have drawn him from his bed, and all the way down here," and mamma sprang from her seat and toward Bobboker, while papa roared:

"You young tatterdemalion, if you don't scamper back to bed, I'll give you a sound drubbing. What do you mean by getting up after you have been put to rest?"

"Oh, Will?" exclaimed mamma, picking up her child.

"Don't 'awnt a 'dwubbin'," cried Bobboker, and he cried a great many other things after he had his head safely pillow'd on his mother's shoulder.

"I'll get him into bed again within two minutes, dear," said mamma, hurrying up the stairs, and leaving a long train of minor wailing behind her.

Papa dashed about the room in a manner that would

have made the furniture shudder with fear, were it not that furniture is mercifully spared the sensibilities peculiar to poor humanity. He was preparing a terrible statement of his views concerning children, when mamma spoiled his train of thought by dashing into the room ; for the promptness with which she had disposed of the juvenile disturber was wonderful enough to elicit admiration from a far angrier man than papa. To be sure, she came in as smilingly as if nothing had happened, and this would have been enough to aggravate papa's mental disorder had the young man not been powerless when within the range of a loving smile from his wife. Then mamma seated herself at the piano, and faced the "Jewel Song," without a shudder. She knew she was being guilty of the maddest temerity, but what would she not attempt for the husband who loved her, and whom she loved so dearly ? She had read of men—soldiers—who, single-handed, had charged a troop or a battery, nerved only by love of dear ones or country, and the "Jewel Song" was no more affrighting than a troop or battery—not much more so, anyway. So she struck the key-note, and attempted it with her voice ; whether she got it correctly she did not exactly know, for at the same time she heard a voice shouting :

"Mamma!"

"What is it, Freddie?"

"Be quiet, sir!" exclaimed papa, flying to the foot of the stairs, and shaking his fist savagely at his heir.

"Let us see first what is the matter, dear," suggested mamma, approaching her husband. "Why are you not in bed, Freddie?"

"Isn't somebody going to hear us say our prayers?" inquired Fred.

"Dear, dear," sighed mamma; "I forgot that, in my hurry to get back to you, Will." Then mamma looked at papa, who almost glared at her in return; she wished her husband might volunteer to go and conduct the devotions of his children, and he wickedly wished that prayers had never been invented. Then papa slowly became aware of the selfishness of his feeling, so he sneaked away to grumble to himself in the parlor, and mamma slowly and sadly went up to her boy, took the heavy little fellow in her arms, and kissed him all the way from the hallway to his bed, and left something on his face that was moister than kisses.

As for papa, he spent several moments in a savage attempt to justify his anger to himself. Praying was right enough, of course, he had nothing to say against prayer, but he wished that children were devout enough to think of their prayers while there was some one present to listen to them, instead of tormenting adults into doing

something which was the exact reverse of prayer. And if women would only attend to their household affairs as systematically as their husbands attended to business, what a difference he knew there would be in the happiness of husbands !

When mamma returned to the parlor, she found it empty ; but a hasty note had been scrawled by papa on the fly-leaf of a book, and placed on the music-rack of the piano. It said that papa was just going to run up for a few minutes to the Whiffle Club, and see if he couldn't bring a couple of the boys back with him ; then there could be a rubber of whist. Mamma knew by experience exactly what that meant : she was to be alone for the remainder of the evening, and perhaps half the night. But perhaps The Jefful would wake with pain from her coming teeth, and need to be comforted ; she might even have a call from Bobboker, whose hearty suppers often gave him night-mare ; so she might not have an utterly lonesome evening, after all.

And thus it was that the thread of mamma's existence, like that of millions of other mothers with loving, thoughtless husbands, was woven through the MORNING, NOON, AFTERNOON AND EVENING OF ONE DAY.

THE END.

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